

Parsha Ponders

Nasso | June 14, 2019 | 11 Sivan 5779

*A most difficult match*¹

אין מזווגין לו לאדם אשה אלא לפי מעשיו וכו' וקשין לזווגן כקריעת ים סוף וכו' והא וכו' ארבעים יום קודם ליצירת הוולד בת קול יוצאת ואומרת בת פלוני לפלוני וכו' לא קשיא, הא בזיווג ראשון והא בזיווג שני
A man's wife is determined based on his actions...and it's as hard (for Hashem, so to speak²) as the splitting of the Reed Sea...But is that so? At the moment of conception³ a Heavenly voice calls out "The daughter of so-and-so is to marry so-and-so" ...This isn't a contradiction. [It's preannounced] with a person's first match, and [it's difficult] when it's their second match⁴

This week's *parsha* discusses the *Sotah*, a suspected adulteress, and the way in which she can clear her name to her husband. Since such topics are not the most positive⁵, Reish Lakish would begin his class on the topic by relating a nicer discussion of how a couple meets in the first place⁶. He says that a person's second match is as hard for Hashem to make as it was to split the Reed Sea. Why is this so? Is it really so difficult⁷? To compare it to one of the greatest miracles in our history⁸? Something so intense that it caused the entire world to tremble⁹? What's the comparison¹⁰? Also, why does a person's first match need some sort of Heavenly announcement, and so early? Why couldn't it have been when they were born, instead of when they were conceived? How does this announcement work, such that without it, the match is difficult to make? Finally, why is a match compared to the splitting of the sea, something representing separation and distance. A more appropriate comparison would have been the miracle of the Arnon valleys, where Hashem caused two mountains to come together to squish the Jews' enemies¹¹.

One possible explanation is based on the commentary of the Ramban¹². What makes Man and Woman different than animals? Animals feel no intrinsic connection to those they mate with. Man and Woman however, feel a very deep connection to one another. This comes from the fact that they were originally created one, and later separated¹³. Although they are no longer together, they forever long to reunite. However, this union comes with a new separation. When a person gets married, they inevitably leave their other strongest relationship, one which they've had their whole life. They have to leave their parents¹⁴. The very people that raised them, took care of them, nurtured them. Somehow, this spouse,

¹ Based on Be'er Yosef to Numbers 5:12

² Rashi *ad. loc.*

³ Literally: forty days before the formation of the fetus. יצירת הוולד occurs forty days after conception (see Berachos 60a). Thus, forty days before יצירת הוולד refers to the point of conception, but in a euphemistic way

⁴ Sotah 2a

⁵ My interpretation

⁶ *Ibid*

⁷ The Be'er Yosef brings from Moed Kattan 18b and his commentary to Exodus 2:21 that although everything is from Hashem, *shidduchim* in specific are where Hashem's providence is most apparent. Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz says the same in Sichos Mussar § 35

⁸ See Psalms 106:22

⁹ Exodus 15:14

¹⁰ See Tosafos Shantz *ad. loc.* and Zohar II *parshas Terumah* p. 170b for one approach

¹¹ See Numbers 21:14,15 with Rashi, based on Berachos 54b and Midrash Tanchuma *Chukas* § 20

¹² Genesis 2:23. See also the Tur's introduction to *Ever HaEzer*

¹³ *Ibid* 1:27, 2:21-22

¹⁴ *Ibid* v. 24

who until recently was a stranger, takes primacy in their life. Their relationship becomes stronger than the one they had with their parents.

This switch seems beyond nature. To aid this major life shift, Hashem arranged it so that from the moment of conception, it is already decided who it is a person will marry. At that point, they don't yet have any connection with their parents. It turns out then that a person's connection with their spouse precedes that of with their parents. This makes the transition from singlehood to married life smoother and easier. This is true for a person's first match.

However, their second match doesn't have this prearrangement. Therefore, their relationship with their parents preceded that of their second match. This makes the transition from having their parents have primacy in their life to having their spouse play that role, incredibly difficult. This is represented by the comparison to the splitting of the Reed Sea, and the Jews leaving Egypt. Just like the waters split apart, and the Jews were extracted from servitude in Egypt, a single person who gets married is in a sense "separated" from their parents. Their relationship doesn't take primacy anymore. Instead, they cling to their spouse, who until recently was a complete stranger in their life.

What does it mean first match and second match? Most will assume it means a first marriage and a second marriage¹⁵. However, there are those¹⁶ who have a more unique approach. It depends on if the person is held accountable for their actions or not. This is referring to Heavenly judgement¹⁷, which holds people accountable from the age of twenty and up¹⁸. When they're that age, their match is determined by their actions, as they are viewed as responsible for what they do. If they are younger, then their match is prearranged¹⁹.

This means that most people today in reality marry their "second match". Their match isn't prearranged, rather it's determined by their actions. Normally, this wouldn't be so difficult. However, because of the intense bond every child has with their parent, it's almost supernatural for that relationship to be replaced with a new one. It's almost like splitting the Reed Sea.

Good Shabbos

¹⁵ That's how Tosafos Shantz *loc. cit.* explains it

¹⁶ Meiri ad. loc. See also Kesav Sofer to Genesis 2:18 s.v. עזר כנגדו (#2)

¹⁷ This is how the Be'er Yosef reads the Meiri, and it is indeed compelling. However, my former chavrusa Chezky Freund said that someone chashuv in the Mir told him the Meiri is referring to accountability to the Earthly court, which begins from the age of thirteen. The Meiri's exact phraseology is: מפנות הדת ומיסודותיה הוא להאמין ביושר משפטי הש"י להיות האדם נגמל ונענש בכל עניניו לפי מעשיו אם טוב ואם רע...והעמידוהו בזווג שני ר"ל שהוא בזמן ראוי לענש וגמול אבל בזמן שאינו ראוי לכך הוא הנקרא זווג ראשון מצד שסתמו הוא בזמן הקטנות סמוך לפרק. Although he starts off talking about Divine punishment for our actions, which starts at twenty (see next note), he does end by mentioning "סמוך לפרק", which in Sanhedrin 76b it's understood (see Rashi and Tosafos ad. loc.) to be referring to thirteen

¹⁸ Shabbos 89b; Yerushalmi Bikkurim 2:1, brought by Tosafos to Moed Kattan 28a s.v. במה בחמשים; Yerushalmi Sanhedrin 11:5; Midrash Tanchuma Korach § 5; Bereishis Rabbah 48:1; Bamidbar Rabbah 18:4. See also Torah Sheleimah to Genesis Chapter 3 § 202. For discussions on the ramifications of this concept, see Teshuvos Chacham Tzvi § 49 (and the Chida's rebuttal in Nachal Kadumim Chayei Sarah), Noda B'Yehudah II Yoreh Deah § 164, Teshuvos Chasam Sofer Yoreh Deah § 155, Chavos Yair § 166, Pardes Yosef to Genesis 23:1, Sichos Chochmah UMussar § 50 (from Rav Dovid Kronglass zt"l, mashgiach of Yeshivas Ner Yisroel)

¹⁹ See the end of the Be'er Yosef, who uses this Meiri to give a new explanation to Avos 5:21