

A brief history of...

SHALOM BAYIT

ג וְהוּא, עָבַר לִפְנֵיהֶם ; Gen 33:3 And he himself passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.
וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אֶרְצָה שִׁבְעַ
פְּעָמִים, עַד-גִּשְׁתּוֹ עַד-אָחִיו.

ד וַיָּרֻץ עֲשׂוֹ לִקְרֹאתוֹ 4 And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him; and they wept.
וַיַּחֲבֹקְהוּ, וַיִּפֹּל עַל-צַוְאָרוֹ
וַיִּשָּׁקְהוּ ; וַיִּבְכּוּ.

Shalom bayit (Hebrew: שְׁלוֹם בַּיִת ; lit. *peace of the home*) (also **shelom bayit**, **shlom bayit**, or (Yiddish) **sholom bayis**) is the Jewish religious concept of domestic harmony and good relations between husband and wife. In a Jewish court of law, *shalom bayit* is the Hebrew term for marital reconciliation. The term *sh'lom beto* (Hebrew: שְׁלוֹם בֵּיתוֹ ; lit *peace of his home*) is found in the Talmud regarding domestic peace in general.

Parashat Vayishlach 5776

Temple Beth El

HALAKHA

ומפני בטול עניים – שלא יהיו עניים
יושבין ומשמרין: עבשו מניח בעל
הבית פאה. ומפני חסד – שלא יהיו
עובדין ושבין אומרים: תבא מארה
לאדם שלא הניח פאה בשדהו. ומשום
"כל תכלה". אטו בוליהו לאו משום
"כל תכלה" מנהוג? אמר רבא: מפני
הרמאי.

And due to causing the poor to be idle; so that the poor, who have no way of knowing when he is going to cut the grain and where in the field he is going to leave the *pe'a*, will not be sitting and observing until he designates the *pe'a* and constantly saying to themselves: Now the owner of the field is placing *pe'a*. Now that he leaves the *pe'a* in a defined area at the end of his field, and the poor people know exactly where they can receive their portion, they need not waste their time in anticipation. And due to suspicion; if one leaves the *pe'a* in the middle of the field, the poor will come and take their portion immediately when he designates the area of *pe'a*. When the owner then continues to cut and harvest the rest of the grain in the field, the *pe'a* will not be noticeable. Insisting that he leave *pe'a* at the end of the field ensures that passersby will not say: A person who did not leave *pe'a* in his field should be cursed. We learned that the fourth reason is due to the verse: You shall not wholly reap. The Gemara wonders: Aren't all of these reasons due to: You shall not wholly reap? All of the reasons explain that one may not reap his entire field and must leave *pe'a* at the end of his field. Rava said: The meaning of the last reason is that *pe'a* is separated that way due to cheaters. There is concern that a person would not leave *pe'a* at all. He would claim that he already separated it in the middle of his field and that the poor already came and took it. In order to bolster the mitzva of *pe'a*, the Sages instituted that it must be separated specifically at the end of one's field. In terms of the discussion in the Gemara, apparently, the desire to avoid arousing suspicion is a factor taken into consideration in determining *halakha*.

אמר רב יצחק בר רדפה אמר רב
הובא: נר שיש לה שני פיות – עולה
לשני בני אדם. אמר רבא: מילא קערה
שמן והקיפה פתילות, כפה עליה כלי –
עולה לבמה בני אדם. לא כפה עליה
כלי – עשאה במין מדורה, ואפילו
לאחד נמי אינה עולה.

Rav Yitzhak bar Redifa said that Rav Huna said: Lighting an oil lamp that has two spouts,¹⁸ with one wick placed in each of the spouts, is considered to have fulfilled the obligation of kindling the Hanukkah light for two people. Similarly, Rava said: One who filled a bowl with oil and placed wicks all around it,¹⁹ if he overturned a vessel on top of it, it is considered to have fulfilled the obligation of lighting the Hanukkah light for several people, corresponding to the number of wicks. By overturning a vessel atop the bowl, each wick appears to be burning independently. If one did not overturn a vessel on top of it, he thereby made it appear like a type of bonfire. From afar, the light from all of the flames appear to be a single flame. And it is not even considered to have fulfilled the obligation of lighting the Hanukkah light for one person because the mitzva is specifically to light a flame and not a bonfire.

אמר רבא, פשיטא לי: נר ביתו ונר
הנוקה – נר ביתו עדיף, משום שלום
ביתו. נר ביתו וקידוש הבית – נר ביתו
עדיף, משום שלום ביתו. בעי רבא:
נר הנוקה וקידוש הבית מהו? קידוש
הבית עדיף – דתדיר, או דילמא: נר
הנוקה עדיף, משום פרסומי נסא? בתר
דאבעיא הדר פשטא: נר הנוקה עדיף,
משום פרסומי נסא.

Rava said: It is obvious to me that there is a fixed list of priorities. When a person is poor and must choose between purchasing oil to light a Shabbat lamp for his home or purchasing oil to light a Hanukkah lamp,²⁰ the Shabbat lamp for his home takes precedence. That is due to peace in his home; without the light of that lamp, his family would be sitting and eating their meal in the dark. Similarly, if there is a conflict between acquiring oil to light a lamp for his home and wine for the sanctification [*kiddush*] of Shabbat day, the lamp for his home takes precedence due to peace in his home. However, Rava raised a dilemma: When the conflict is between oil for a Hanukkah lamp or wine for *kiddush* of Shabbat day,²¹ what is the ruling in that case? Does *kiddush* of Shabbat day take priority because it is frequent, i.e., it is performed every week, and there is a principle: When there is a conflict between a frequent practice and an infrequent practice, the frequent practice takes precedence? Or, perhaps the Hanukkah lamp takes precedence due to publicity of the miracle? After he raised the dilemma, he then resolved it on his own and he ruled that, in that case, the Hanukkah lamp takes precedence due to publicity of the miracle.

Oil lamp that has two spouts – נר שיש לה שני פיות: A pottery lamp with two spouts may be used on Hanukkah by two people, according to the *mehadrin* custom that calls for each person to light one light each night. However, according to the *mehadrin min hamehadrin* custom that calls for each person to add a light for each night, two people may not use the same two-spouted pottery lamp (*Magen Avraham*; Rambam *Sefer Zemanim*, *Hilkhot Megilla VaHanukka* 4:4; *Shulhan Arukh*, *Orah Hayyim* 67:3).

One who filled a bowl with oil and placed wicks all around it – מילא קערה שמן והקיפה פתילות: One who overturned a vessel onto a bowl of oil with wicks around its circumference before kindling the Hanukkah lights, each wick is considered an independent light. If he did not cover the bowl, it has the legal status of a bonfire and may not be used to fulfill the mitzva (Rambam *Sefer Zemanim*, *Hilkhot Megilla VaHanukka* 4:4; *Shulhan Arukh*, *Orah Hayyim* 67:4).

Lamp for his home or a Hanukkah lamp – נר ביתו ונר הנוקה: One who lacks the means to purchase oil to kindle both the Shabbat and the Hanukkah lights should purchase and kindle the Shabbat lights (Rambam *Sefer Zemanim*, *Hilkhot Megilla VaHanukka* 4:4; *Shulhan Arukh*, *Orah Hayyim* 263:3; 678:1).

Hanukkah lamp and *kiddush* of Shabbat day – נר הנוקה וקידוש הבית: One who lacks the means to purchase both oil for the Hanukkah lights and wine for *kiddush* should purchase oil for Hanukkah, due to the obligation to publicize the miracle, as per the opinion of Rava. The same is true when the choice is between oil for Hanukkah and wine for *havdala* (Rambam *Sefer Zemanim*, *Hilkhot Megilla VaHanukka* 4:3; *Shulhan Arukh*, *Orah Hayyim* 296:5; 678:1).

BACKGROUND

נר שיש לה שני פיות – Oil lamp that has two spouts:



Two spouts for wicks
In the same pottery lamp

Pottery lamp

Weave [teizul] – תִּיזַל: The versions of Gemara cited by the *ge'onim* and Rabbeinu Hananel read *teidul* or *teidvil*. In Syriac this word means weaving, which ties in well with the idea that one should buy an item ready-made.

Mats [bistarkei] – בִּיסְתָרְקֵי: Apparently a loanword from the Middle Iranian *bistarak*, meaning bedding, mattress, or cover.

Friend [shushevina] – שוּשְׁבִינָא: This word is originally Akkadian, from where it was adapted into both Aramaic and Hebrew. Its primary meaning is the one who accompanies the groom to the wedding canopy and helps with some of the technical arrangements of the wedding, and so forth. Its meaning was broadened to a general term for a close friend.

NOTES

Close it up and do not enlarge it and plaster it – וְלֹא תִשְׁפִּיץ: According to the Meiri this is an injunction to fix things quickly before they get worse, as it is easier to close up a hole than to plaster an entire wall. Similarly, he should replaster the wall in order to ensure that he will not have to build it again from scratch.

Calamity befalls... only, etc. – וְלֹא וְכוּ: This complements the previous teaching: Just as the fate of the world depends on the Jewish people with regard to blessing, the same applies with regard to misfortune. Consequently, the Jewish people should know that their own fate as well as that of other nations lies in their hands (see Meiri and *Iyyun Ya'akov*).

Is there anything that is worse than death – וְהֵיכָּן מִיֵּד: Elsewhere the Sages list numerous problems that are worse than death, including captivity and famine. The *Iyyun Ya'akov* explains that it was due to these different possibilities that Rav sought to discover the precise nature of his mentor's blessing. Since he realized that Rabbi Hiyya had presumably also been giving him advice along with his blessing, he concluded that Rabbi Hiyya was referring to a bad wife. Furthermore, knowing that Rabbi Hiyya's own wife caused him to suffer, Rav realized that this must have been what he meant.

You should not do so – אַתָּה לֹא תַעֲבִיד הָבִי: Admittedly, it is permitted to depart from the truth for the sake of peace, but since in this case there is another way of achieving the same result, it is better not to grow accustomed to telling lies (Meiri; Rabbi Avraham min HaHar).

אמר רב פפא: וְעַל וְלֹא תִיזַל. אף על גב דְּכִי הָדִי מְנָהוּ – הֵיכָּן מְבָרְכִין וְגוֹן וְלֹא תִיזַל. הֵיכָּן מְבָרְכִין – בִּיסְתָרְקֵי. אֲבָל גְּלִימָא – לֹא מִיִּתְרָמֵא לִיהּ.

טוב וְלֹא תִשְׁפִּיץ. שְׂפוֹץ וְלֹא תִיזַל. שְׂפוֹץ הָעֵינִיק דְּבִנְיָן מִתְמַסְכֵּן. קְמוּץ וְגוֹן אֲנָא. מִתּוֹן נָסִיב אִיתְתָּא. נְחִית וְדָגָא נָסִיב אִיתְתָּא. סָךְ דְּרָגָא בְּהוּ שוּשְׁבִינָא.

אמר רבי אלעזר בר אביןא: אין פורענות באה לעולם אלא בשביל ישראל, שנאמר "הַכְרַתִּי גוֹיִם נִשְׁמוֹתָם הַתְרַבֵּיתִי חוֹצוֹתָם" וְכָתִיב "אֲמַרְתִּי אֵן תִּיֵּרָא אוֹתִי תִקְחִי מִכֹּר".

רב הוה מִפְטֵר מְרִבִּי חִיָּיא. אָמַר לִיהּ. וְחִמְנָא לִיזְלֵךְ מִמֵּינִי דְקִשָּׁה מְמוּתָא. וְכִי אִיכָא מִינִי דְקִשָּׁה מְמוּתָא? נִפְקַד וְאִשְׁבַּח יִמּוּצָא אֲנִי מִרְמָתָא אֵת הָאִשָּׁה וְכוּ'. רב הוה קָא מַצְעֵרָא לִיהּ דְּבִיתָהּ, כִּי אָמַר לֵהּ "עֲבִידִי לִי מְלוּפְחִי עֲבֵדָא לִיהּ חִמְנָא, 'חִמְנָא' – עֲבֵדָא לִיהּ טְלוּפְחִי.

כי גדל חייא ברבי, אמר ליה. אפיק ליה. אמר ליה: אינני רוצה לך אמן! אמר ליה: אָנָּה הוּא דְקָא אִפְקֵינָא לֵהּ. אָמַר לִיהּ: חִיָּיא דְקָא אָמַר אִנְשִׁי דְנִפְקִי מִיָּן – טַעְמָא מִלְפָּנֶיךָ. אַתָּה לֹא תַעֲבִיד הָבִי, שְׂנֵאמַר "לְמַדוֹ לְשׁוֹנֵם דְּבִר שֶׁקֶר הָעוֹד" וְכוּ'.

Rav Pappa¹ said: Sow your own produce and do not buy it. Even though they are equal to each other in value, these that you sow will be blessed. Conversely, buy your clothes rather than weave [teizul]¹ them yourself. The Gemara comments: This applies only to mats [bistarkei]¹, but with regard to the cloak one wears, perhaps he will not find it precisely to his liking, and therefore he should make his own cloak, which fits his measurements.

Rav Pappa further advised: If there is a hole in your house, close it up and do not enlarge it and then plaster it,¹ or at least plaster it and do not knock it down and build it again. As, whoever engages in construction becomes poor. Hurry to buy land so that you do not lose the opportunity. Be patient and marry a woman who is suitable for you. Descend a level to marry a woman of lower social status, and ascend a level to choose a friend [shushevina].¹

Rabbi Elazar bar Avina said: Calamity befalls the world only¹ due to the sins of the Jewish people, as it is stated: "I have cut off nations, their corners are desolate; I have made their streets waste" (Zephaniah 3:6), and it is written: "I said: Surely you will fear Me, you will receive correction" (Zephaniah 3:7). This indicates that other nations were punished so that the Jewish people would mend their ways.

The Gemara cites more statements with regard to wives. When Rav¹ was taking leave of his uncle and teacher, Rabbi Hiyya, upon his return from Eretz Yisrael to Babylonia, Rabbi Hiyya said to him: May the Merciful One save you from something that is worse than death. Rav was perplexed: Is there anything that is worse than death?¹ He went, examined the sources, and found the following verse: "And I find more bitter than death the woman, etc." (Ecclesiastes 7:26). Rabbi Hiyya was hinting at this verse, and indeed, Rav's wife would constantly aggravate him. When he would say to her: Prepare me lentils, she would prepare him peas; if he asked her for peas, she would prepare him lentils.

When Hiyya, his son, grew up, he would reverse the requests Rav asked him to convey to her, so that Rav would get what he wanted. Rav said to his son Hiyya: Your mother has improved now that you convey my requests. He said to Rav: It is I who reverse your request to her. Rav said to him: This is an example of the well-known adage that people say: He who comes from you shall teach you wisdom; I should have thought of that idea myself. You, however, should not do so,¹ i.e., reverse my request, as it is stated: "They have taught their tongue to speak lies, they weary themselves to commit iniquity, etc." (Jeremiah 9:4). If you attribute such a request to me, you will have uttered a falsehood.

PERSONALITIES

Rav Pappa – רַב פָּפָא: Rav Pappa, from the fifth generation of Babylonian *amora'im*, was a student of both Abaye and Rava in Pumbedita. After Rava's death Rav Pappa established an academy in Neresh, where he was joined by his close friend, Rav Huna, son of Rav Yehoshua, who was appointed chief lecturer. Many of Rava's students came to study under Rav Pappa, who had more than two hundred students attending his lectures.

Rav Pappa's father was a wealthy merchant and supported him throughout many years of Talmud study. Rav Pappa became a wealthy businessman in his own right and a successful brewer of date beer. He also prospered in other business ventures. The Talmud records that he engaged in trade with both Jews and gentiles and had a reputation for fairness and generosity in his business dealings. Rav Huna became his partner in many such undertakings and became wealthy as well.

Rav Pappa had great respect for the Sages, and upon entering a city he would immediately call upon the rabbinic head of the community. Once, Rav Pappa felt that he had spoken inappropriately about one of the Sages, and he took upon

himself a personal fast as penance for his act. He was reluctant to offer final rulings in various areas of *halakha*, and he often chose to be stringent in accordance with both opinions in the Talmud rather than rule in accordance with a single opinion.

Rav Pappa was blessed with ten sons, all of whom were Torah scholars. Traditionally, the names of the ten sons of Rav Pappa are recited as part of the ceremony at the completion of the study of a tractate. While the source of this tradition is unclear and the identities of the sons are uncertain as well, the Rema suggests that it commemorates the celebrations made by Rav Pappa with his sons upon completing a course of study.

Rav – רַב: Rav, whose full name was Rabbi Abba ben Ayvu, was the first, and perhaps the greatest, of the Babylonian *amora'im*. Known as Abba Arikha because of his great height, Rav established the academy in Sura which lasted eight hundred years, through the period of the *ge'onim*. In addition to the visiting students who attended the academy only during the *kalla* months of Adar and Elul, the Gemara reports that twelve hundred full-time students studied in the academy throughout the year.

In his youth, Rav traveled to Eretz Yisrael with his uncle, Rabbi Hiyya, where he studied under Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, the editor of the Mishna. He traveled back and forth between Israel and Babylonia until he settled in Babylonia in the year 219 CE. Rav's greatness is apparent not only in the large number of *amora'im* who were his students and who quote him throughout the Talmud, but also by the fact that in addition to his status as the first *amora*, he is recognized as the last of the *tanna'im* and consequently was permitted to disagree with tannaitic rulings.

Rav's teachings are found throughout both the Jerusalem and the Babylonian Talmuds. Among his many rulings are several that concern issues of marriage, such as his ruling that a man should not marry a woman without first meeting her, and that underage girls should not be married until they are old enough to state whom they want to marry. His rulings in the area of ritual *halakha* were invariably accepted, although the rulings of his colleague Shmuel were accepted in criminal and financial matters. Rav's son, Rabbi Hiyya, followed in his father's footsteps and became a great scholar; his other son, Ayvu, was a merchant.

The Gemara cites other statements made by Rabbi Ile'a in the name of Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon. And Rabbi Ile'a said in the name of Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon: Just as it is a mitzva for a person to say that which will be heeded, so is it a mitzva for a person not to sayⁿ that which will not be heeded. One should not rebuke those who will be unreceptive to his message. Rabbi Abba says: It is obligatory for him to refrain from speaking, as it is stated: "Do not reprove a scornor lest he hate you; reprove a wise man and he will love you" (Proverbs 9:8).

And Rabbi Ile'a further said in the name of Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon: It is permitted for a person to depart from the truth^N in a matter that will bring peace, as it is stated: "Your father commanded before he died, saying: So you shall say to Joseph: Please pardon your brothers' crime, etc." (Genesis 50:16-17). Jacob never issued this command, but his sons falsely attributed this statement to him in order to preserve peace between them and Joseph.

Rabbi Natan says: It is a mitzva to depart from the truth in order to preserve peace, as it is stated: “And Samuel said: How can I go, and Saul will hear and kill me” (1 Samuel 16:2). God responded in the next verse that Samuel should say he went to sacrifice an offering, indicating that God commands one to lie in order to preserve peace.

It was taught in the school of Rabbi Yishmael: Great is peace," as even the Holy One, Blessed be He, departed from the truth for it. As, initially it is written that Sarah said of Abraham: "And my lord is old" (Genesis 18:12), and in the end it is written that God told Abraham that Sarah said: "And I am old" (Genesis 18:13). God adjusted Sarah's words in order to spare Abraham hurt feelings that might lead Abraham and Sarah to quarrel.

§ It is taught in the mishna that Rabbi Yohanan ben Beroka says that women are also included in the mitzva to be fruitful and multiply. It was stated that two *amora'im*, Rabbi Yohanan and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, disagreed concerning this matter. One said that the *halakha* is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yohanan ben Beroka, and one said that the *halakha* is not in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yohanan ben Beroka.

The Gemara comments: **Conclude that it was Rabbi Yoḥananⁿ who said that the *halakha* is not in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yoḥanan ben Beroka, as Rabbi Abbahu sat and said in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan that the *halakha* is in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yoḥanan ben Beroka, and Rabbi Ami and Rabbi Asi, who were sitting across from him, turned their faces as an indication that they disagreed with this report of Rabbi Yoḥanan's opinion, but did not want to explicitly contradict Rabbi Abbahu's statement out of respect for him.**

So is it a mitzva for a person not to say – **דן מצוה על אדם** – **דן מצוה**? The commentaries question why it is permissible to remain silent when there is a mitzva to rebuke wrongdoers (see Leviticus 19:17). The Ritva answers that the Gemara is referring to addressing a group of people, whereas one is always obligated to rebuke an individual. The *Shefa* explains that if the offender knows that he is acting improperly it is proper to rebuke him, but if he does not think he has transgressed the criticism is better left unsaid. Alternatively, if one rebukes another who does not accept reproof, this will only cause the latter to act willfully in the future, and it is preferable for him to remain an unwitting sinner (*hyun Ya'akov*).

It is permitted for a person to depart from the truth – **מותר**
ללכת לאחור. The Gemara does not cite Sarah's reaction: "And
 Sarah denied, saying I did not laugh" (Genesis 18:15), as proof that
 one may depart from the truth, as she did so only when faced
 with an accusation, whereas the other verses prove that one
 may take the initiative in stating falsehoods for the sake of peace
 (Arukh LaNeri).

It is a mitzva to depart from the truth...great is peace – **מְרִיבָה**
וְלֹא תִסְרֹף The commentaries point out that God did not com-
mand Samuel to tell an outright lie, but rather to take an animal
with him and sacrifice it. In this way he would not be lying if he
said that he was traveling to sacrifice an offering, even though he
would be omitting the main purpose of his journey, which was to
anoint David as the next king of the Jewish people. A similar claim
can be made with regard to God's report to Abraham that Sarah
said: And I am old; as she herself did say: "After my withering shall
I have youth" (Genesis 18:2). God simply left out her additional
comment: "And my lord is old" (Meiri; see *Tosafot Yeshanim*).

Conclude that It was Rabbi Yohanan, etc. תרתי ידיו יתן: It would appear that the Gemara does not prove what Rabbi Yohanan's opinion is, as it merely cites a dispute among his students about the matter. Perhaps that is why the Gemara continues by citing Rabbi Abbahu in the name of Rabbi Asi with regard to the incident in Caesarea; it is an attempt to prove that they actually both agree that Rabbi Yohanan held in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yohanan ben Beroka (Arukh LaNer).

רַבִּי
אָמַר
יִשְׁתַּן
וְיִתֵּן
חֶמֶד

יְהוָה
יִלְלֶה
וְיִלְלֶה
יְהוָה

אמר
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רדה?

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רבי חייא הוה קא מצערא ליה דביהמה.
כי הוה משכבת מידי - צייר ליה בסודריוה,
ומייתי מיהלה. אמר ליה רב: והא קא
מצערא ליה לקרו! אמר ליה: דייני
שמןגדלות בנותי, ומצילות אותי.

The Gemara relates a similar story. Rabbi Hiyya's wife would constantly aggravate him. Nevertheless, when he would find something she would appreciate, he would wrap it in his shawl and bring it to her. Rav said to him: Doesn't she constantly aggravate you? Why do you bring her things? Rabbi Hiyya said to him: It is enough for us that our wives raise our children and save us.

Perek VI
Daf 63 Amud b

NOTES

שטותי מתפסקין [mitpakekin] - שטותי מתפסקין. According to Rashi, mitpakekin means sealed. Rlaf explains that Rashi means not that his sins are entirely forgiven, but that they are sealed up, pending his behavior after marriage. The Arukh, however, understands mitpakekin as meaning to become loosened.

Matza or motze - מצא או מוצא: Some commentaries explain that in addition to alluding to the two verses this phrase is a question on its own: Matza means a good find, while motze refers not to someone who finds an item, but to the author of the book of Ecclesiastes, King Solomon, who found, i.e., realized and publicized, that a bad wife is more bitter than death. The Arukh LaNer explains the fact that the word matza is in past tense indicates an unusual occurrence, whereas motze is the more common usage.

Her rival is at her side - ירתה בצדה: The Meiri explains that he should threaten to marry another woman.

A day of heavy rain - יום סערי: Just as one cannot escape the continual dripping in a leaky house by escaping outside on a rainy day, this husband suffers from a continuous downpour of abuse from which he cannot escape (Maharsha).

מן התקט. מקרי ליה רב יהודה לרב יצחק בריה: "ומוצא אני מר ממות את האשה". אמר ליה: כגון מאן? כגון אמן.

from sin. We should therefore show our gratitude to them. The Gemara cites a related incident: Rav Yehuda was teaching Torah to Rav Yitzhak, his son, and they encountered the verse: "And I find more bitter than death the woman" (Ecclesiastes 7:26). His son said to him: For example, whom? His father replied: For example, your mother.

והא מתני ליה רב יהודה לרב יצחק בריה: אין אדם מוצא קורת רוח אלא מאשתו ראשונה. שנאמר: "יהי מקורך ברוך וישמח מאשת נעוריו". ואמר ליה: כגון מאן? כגון אמן. מתקין תקופא. ועבדתי מיעברא במלה.

The Gemara asks: Didn't Rav Yehuda teach Rav Yitzhak, his son, the following baraita: A man finds peace of mind only with his first wife, as it is stated: "Let your fountain be blessed, and have joy from the wife of your youth" (Proverbs 5:18), and his son said to him: For example, whom, and his father responded in this case as well: For example, your mother. This indicates that Rav Yehuda did find peace of mind with his wife. The Gemara answers: She was aggressive and forceful, but she was easily appeased.

היכי דמי אשה רעה? אמר אביי: מקשטא ליה תבא. ומקשטא ליה פומא. וקא אמר: מקשטא ליה תבא. ומקדרא ליה גבא.

The Gemara asks: What are the circumstances when a woman is considered a bad wife? Abaye said: She arranges a table for him and arranges her mouth for him at the same time. In other words, although she prepares food for him, she verbally abuses him while he eats. Rava said: She arranges a table for him and then turns her back to him, displaying her lack of interest in his company.

אמר רבי חמא בר חנינא: כיון שנשא אדם אשה - שטותי מתפסקין, שנאמר: "מצא אשה מצא טוב ויפק רצון מה". במערכא, כי נסיב אינש איתתא אמרי ליה רבי: מצא או מוצא? מצא - דכתיב: "מצא אשה מצא טוב", "מוצא" - דכתיב: "ומוצא אני מר ממות את האשה".

Rabbi Hama bar Hanina said: Once a man marries a woman his iniquities crumble [mitpakekin], as it is stated: "Whoever finds a wife finds good, and obtains [veyafek] favor of the Lord" (Proverbs 18:22). In the West, i.e., Eretz Yisrael, when a man married a woman they would say to him as follows: Matza or motze? In other words, they would ask the groom if the appropriate passage for his wife is that verse, which begins with the word matza, as it is written: Whoever finds [matza] a wife finds good, or whether the more appropriate verse is the one beginning with the word motze, as it is written: "And I find [motze] more bitter than death the woman" (Ecclesiastes 7:26).

אמר רבא: אשה רעה מצוה לגרשה. דכתיב: "גרש לך ויצא מדון וישובות דין וקלון". ואמר רבא: אשה רעה וכתובתה כרובה - צרתה בצדה. ודאמרי אינשי: בחברתה ולא בסילתא. ואמר רבא: קשה אשת רעה כיום סערי. שנאמר: "דלך טורד כיום סערי ואשת מדינים נשתתה".

Rava said: It is a mitzva to divorce a bad wife, as it is written: "Cast out the scorner and contention will depart; strife and shame will cease" (Proverbs 22:10). And Rava said: A bad wife whose marriage contract settlement is too large for her husband to pay in the event of a divorce, her rival wife is at her side.¹ In other words, the only way for him to improve matters is to take another wife. As people say in the well-known adage: The way to trouble a woman is with her peer and not with a thorn. And Rava said: A bad wife is as troublesome as a day of heavy rain,² as it is stated: "A continual dropping on a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike" (Proverbs 27:15).

SYNOPSIS:

This Shabbat's *Sedra* starts off with the wonderful reconciliation in which Jacob makes peace with his brother who had sworn to kill him. It would be great if we could all make peace with such family members. Jacob prepares for this family healing by wrestling with an angel all night long who gives him his higher name, Israel.

The portion continues with the rape of Dinah and the murder of the whole town from which the rapist came. Rebecca's nurse Deborah died. Rachel died. Isaac died. Heavy stuff. The portion ends describing the line of Esau and the beginning of the kings of Edom, which somehow is related in the Jewish psyche with the later rise of Rome.

MEDRASHIC VORT:

According to one Medrash, Dinah became pregnant and gave birth to a daughter, Asnat, who wasn't fully welcomed by the Jacobian family. She eventually left home, hitchhiked down to Egypt, was adopted by an Egyptian family named Potiphar, and eventually became the wife of Joseph.

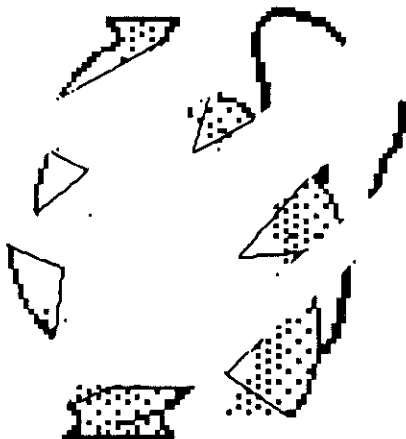
KABBALAH VORT:

These "kings" who "ruled and died," "ruled and died," (Genesis 36:31-39) represent the breaking of the vessels. As the *Ayn Sof*, the infinite light, flooded a succession of would-be containers (the *Sefirot* in an early, primitive version), each one was in turn broken, scattering the sparks of the Divine towards this earth.

Our task, now, as the Arizal explains it, is to fix the cosmos by traveling to everywhere we can, and connecting with every person we are able to, in order to bring back these misplaced parts of the Divine vehicle. Like the Blues Brothers, we are all on a mission from God – and the farther flung we are, the more chance there is that we will be able to do a most unique gathering.

META-THEMES:

After working out one's emotional inheritance and making peace with siblings, one is free to turn one's whole energy into integrating one's highest dreams and visions with the many, many needs of guiding one's own family.



MODERN MEDRASH:

Rape and revenge on the town of Shekhem.

Actually, there's very little Torah discussion that I could locate on this subject. This makes me uncomfortable since the underlying thesis of these Meta-Parshahs is that there are many possible interesting and relevant interpretations of the Torah available, and that they may be found in Jewish mystical texts or in Hassidic texts. Actually, many of these texts all focus on the very same verses and omit completely, almost as if by collusion, commentary on others.

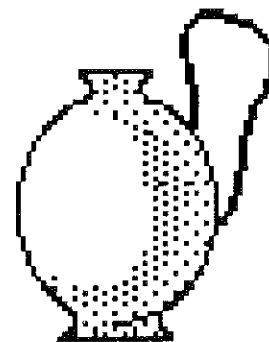
There are thousands of pages written on the many levels of information possible concerning the passage of wrestling with the angel. So far though, I have located zero pages from Hassidic sources on the topic of this subtitle. Therefore, I am forced to make one up and place it under the rubric of Modern Medrash.

The subject is the collective culpability of the entire civilization. Dinah was raped. The whole town was cruelly punished by Simeon and Levi. Jacob disagreed with this collective punishment and cursed their violence and anger.

Modern Medrash says that, in some ways, we are all Dinah. We have all been psychologically raped. Rape comes from the Latin root *rapere*, to seize and carry off. It suggests being seized and carried away by a masculine enemy through brutal sexual assault. Psychological rape occurs when one's spirit is taken over by force, carried away from your control without your consent. When the force principle is over-dominant and powerful minorities culturally dominate for the sake of their own narrow, short-sighted, fiscal self-interest, our psychological health and spirit can be overwhelmed.

We can be victims of our own milieu, the surrounding society. Since the entire culture, the entire civilization is interlocked with the environment –destroying technological and economic growth machine that rapes our world, swallows our time, and shoves our lives towards impossible and elusive financial goals without enjoying the pleasure of the journey of life, what is the solution? Is it to deconstruct the society? Simeon and Levi say yes. Jacob says no.

The same question might be asked of relating to a patriarchal Judaism. Since male exclusivity and misogyny dominate such a large percentage of Judaism, is the solution for an egalitarian-minded spiritual person to let go of, leave behind the whole



Judaism? Jacob says no. Judith Plaskow says no. It may need radical revision, but it is our history (or, at least half of our history), and we carry it within us wherever we go. We can work with it and within it, regrow it from its own roots if need be, that is, our own roots – from the seed of the *Tselem Elohim* the image of God that is within each of us. The evolved Torah which has overcome its exclusionary and dominating ideology can be understood as the Torah of the era of the *Moshiakh*. May new light shine from Zion and may we all be pure enough to see it.

OK, how'd I do? Well it was a heavy *Vort* on a heavy subject, somewhat far-ranging, vaguely political. I don't think that I was successful in interiorizing Dinah, or locating the Dinah in myself or in each one of us. Dinah was not done justice this year.

THE PARSHAH IN THE SEFIRAH CYCLE:

VAYISHLAKH IS KHESED OF GEVURAH

This is the eighth *Parshah* of the Torah and thus begins a new cycle of seven. The previous cycle, starting with *Simkhat Torah* was one of infinite unfolding in a no holds barred landscape. Now, the second cycle appears amidst many more limitations as structures have been set, societies crystallized. The harshness of this *Parshah's* subject matter, the confrontations and dangerous territory that are covered in this week's reading reflects the nature of the beginning of this second cycle, one of *Gevurah*. *Gevurah* suggests strength, might, order, and discipline, but also the potential for domination and overbearing use of power. Dealing with the potential for power to harm, confronting death and violence in a successful, humane and transformative way is extremely important for all future generations.

Friday night, November 25
23 Kislev

VA-YAYSHEV

וישב

SETTLING INTO THE LIFE OF THIS WORLD

Genesis 37:1-40:23

Haf Torah portion: I Amos 2:6-3:8

•Shabbat Mevarkhim Tevet

•Blessing of the New Moon of Tevet FIRST HANUKAH CANDLE IS LIT SUNDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 27

SYNOPSIS:

This Shabbat's *parshah* begins with the story of the shenanigans surrounding Joseph's remarkable dreams which got him almost killed and then sold as a slave. Joseph's beautiful coat is a gift of love from his father, but Joseph flaunts it to his less favored brothers, then adds insult to injury by spouting off about dreams he's had where everyone has to bow down to him. In response, they sell him down the river.

In an interlude story of love longed-for, but unrealized, Judah's daughter-in-law, Tamar, outlives two of his sons (in those days the widow of one brother would be cared for by the next surviving brother) but he "hides" his third from her claiming he is too young yet to marry. Hidden in a veil for disguise, she spies on them and discovers the boy has grown up but was kept from her. One can only imagine the years of loneliness and patience she has endured "waiting" for a promised husband who indeed is being hidden from her on purpose.

Judah, seeing an anonymous veiled woman, assumes she is a prostitute and propositions her. Tamar has sex with Judah and becomes pregnant, bringing potential shame on him. The way that she reveals who the father is exquisitely dignified and he bites the bullet, exposing himself to shame and says "She is more innocent than I am! She did it because I did not give her . . . my son".

deceptions the seed of King David's line starts, proving that good people can come out of parents who fight and are passively aggressive, withholding from each other.

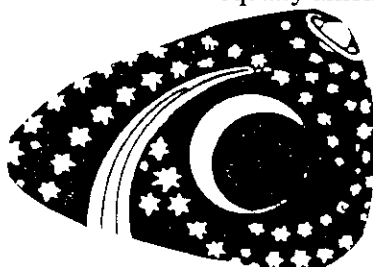
JUNGIAN VORT: JOSEPH'S COAT

Throughout the long history of Israel, the nation as a whole has been the carrier of God-consciousness. Nevertheless, the divine prerogative was not distributed equally among Jacob's children. We learn that "*Adonai* was with Joseph" (Gen. 39:2) and his father singled him out for special favor and gave him a special coat.

In Jungian interpretation, the robe of distinction is an important image. It is the garment of the Self and wearing it unconsciously or carelessly signifies a confusing of one's ego with the higher Self, a form of ego-inflation. For that reason, Joseph must be stripped of it.

Joseph's mistaken over-identification with his special status is also indicated by his dreams, which express both the fact of his election and his inflation.

The Bible and the Psyche Edward Edinger



META-THEMES:

The dreams and visions of Joseph and even the unconscious actions of the tribes carry forward the ancient dreams of Abraham who saw a future of servitude and slavery as a prelude to better dreams of freedom and the evolution of humanity. Even as the tide of capture grows around them, even as they err and hurt each other, the vision of the evolved civilization, the survivable future of *Moshiakh*, grows closer.

MEDRASHIC VORT: JUDAH'S SURRENDER

Some say that this humble surrender of Yehuda's reputation shows that he is worthy to be the progenitor of kings. Through this trail of withholdings and

Learn Torah With... Marcia Cohn Spiegel and Rabbi Kerry M. Olitzky

PARASHAT VA-YISHLAH: (Genesis 32.4-36.43)

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 8

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MARCIA COHN SPIEGEL

When I first started teaching adults about Women in the Bible, I was astonished that so few of my students knew about the rape of Dinah; even those who bore her name. In retrospect I should not have been surprised, because this story is sandwiched between two defining moments of Jewish history: Jacob wrestling with the angel, and Jacob being renamed Israel. I doubt that many rabbis would choose to build their sermons around the violent and tragic tale of Dinah when the alternative is so magnificent. However, as more women are studying texts, Dinah's story reflects some of the issues that they are grappling with: women's silence, women's position in patriarchy, and the failure to recognize the emotional damage to women from sexual violation and abuse.

While the Torah is totally open in describing our forefathers, warts and all, midrash often tries to make them more heroic and excuse their weaknesses. The ancient rabbis struggled with the story of Dinah's rape, but their reinterpretation only adds to the misogynistic and patriarchal components of the tale.

It is difficult for us to acknowledge that Jews are capable of angry, vengeful behavior. By playing "Let's Pretend," we convince ourselves that we are better than our neighbors. We preserve the public image of *Shalom Bayit*, peace in the

house, when we conceal violence and sexually abusive behavior. *Shalom Bayit*, has long been an underlying ideal of Judaism. The sages taught that God seeks peace in the heavens, between the nations on earth, and between husband and wife. They tell us that the ultimate achievement of peace on earth depends upon its achievement in the smallest social unit—the family. Jacob and his family did not live up to this ideal. Nor did Abraham's family; certainly not when he cast out his oldest son or when he offered his youngest son as a sacrifice. It was not true for Isaac and Rebecca who each favored a different one of their twin sons. Their favoritism precipitated Jacob's theft of both birthright and blessing from Esau, forcing him to flee for his life. It was not true when Lot and his daughters committed incest. We must remember that *Shalom Bayit* is a goal, not a measure, when we read this tale of rape, anger, lying, revenge and finally, horrible murder and looting.

The story begins when Jacob fears the wrath of his brother Esau, DIVIDED THE CHILDREN AMONG LEAH, RACHEL AND THE TWO MAIDS, PUTTING THE MAIDS AND THEIR CHILDREN FIRST, LEAH AND HER CHILDREN NEXT, AND RACHEL AND JOSEPH LAST. (Gen. 33.1-2) Just as Isaac showed his love for Esau, Jacob shows his sons that Joseph is his favorite by putting him in the very rear, protected from harm. How do the grown sons of

KERRY M. OLITZKY

Jacob becomes Israel. Enough said.

At the core of our Torah portion, we witness the kind of change for which we all yearn—a radical evolution of self into something wholly other. Even a new name for Jacob is necessary. As a result of the conflict that takes place in the darkness of night, the central character engaged in the struggle of faith that occurs in this week's encounter with the Divine—for which the Genesis narratives are well-known—becomes a different person. This former schemer seems changed, utterly transformed. Perhaps Jacob was, in essence, always Israel, but it took an intense battle with self in order to learn that Torah for himself. The text says that Jacob struggled with an angel, whose task is rather unclear. For me, the angel's role is simply to expose Jacob to his fuller self. It often takes a confrontation with the darkness of the other side, the *sutra achra*, for us to see the many truths that Torah wants to teach us. I wonder whether we ever fully know the nature of our opponent especially when the opponent is merely the other side of self. For only after this puzzling encounter with the angel of the night is Jacob prepared to confront his brother Esau. Rather than making him weary, it took the conflict with a Divine messenger for Jacob to gather the strength and resolve to do what he always knew in his

The Haftarah by Elon Sunshine

Haftarat Vayishlah: Unresolved family conflicts can move across generations. Take the relationship between Jacob and Esau, for example: when Jacob snatched the birthright, Esau didn't exactly take it well. But this week's parashah reports that after many years of estrangement, Jacob and Esau finally met face to face. And didn't they part afterwards on good terms? They did, but they never confronted the built-up resentment they had for one another. Even after Esau bowed out of the Genesis story, the pain of Jacob and Esau's dysfunctional relationship persisted. In *Haftarat Va-Yishlah* (Book of Ovadia), the prophet dredges it up after the Edomite descendants of Esau passively witnessed the destruction of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem: "THE HOUSE OF JACOB SHALL BE FIRE... AND THE HOUSE OF ESAU SHALL BE STRAW; THEY SHALL BURN IT AND DEVOUR IT, AND NO SURVIVOR SHALL BE LEFT OF THE HOUSE OF ESAU" (Ovadia 1:18). The descendants of Jacob and Esau had not yet made peace.

Remember:
"One who says Torah in the name of the person who said it, hastens the Redemption of the world."
MEGILLAH 15A

OLITZKY

heart he had to do—to make peace with brother. If only we could really understand how Jacob struggled with an angel, a messenger of God, and gained fortitude from it.

The brothers had been separated from each other for a long time—shortly after Jacob apparently deluded their sightless father into giving him the blessing that was apparently intended for Esau. Hate and fear blossomed during those years of separation, as such evils of the heart often do. The incident plagued the two brothers through every turn their lives took—the Biblical authors remind us of it through subtle nuances in the text. Both Jacob and Esau carried the various events of their adolescence into their separate lives as adults—a part of what might be describe as “family of origin baggage.”

I understand Jacob’s inner turmoil; each time I see my own brothers (I am the youngest of three), I feel a constant need to reconcile with them, to seek some level of seamless harmony. To be sure, when we were younger, there was no birthright exchange, no misdirected blessing, nothing that even approximated the constant competition between Jacob and Esau. But something drove us apart nonetheless. Maybe it was to be expected as we made lives for ourselves in our own individual ways. At each turn, we certainly found ourselves in vastly different places. And yet, like Jacob, we each have struggled through the night—in our own personal way, with the other side of self—only to find one another similarly searching and looking for the other in the process.

As I think about my relationship with my brothers, I frequently see Jacob’s face in front of me as Esau reaches out to embrace him. With that image seared in my spiritual psyche, I rehearse the reunions of my brothers and me over and over, wondering where they go wrong, wishing that they might be perfect—even though I know that perfection is not the stuff out of which real life is made. And each time we do see one another, honest communication seems more difficult, more elusive. We find our own ways to divide our camps, and to send gifts ahead of time, hoping that we might be able to make amends for whatever has transpired between us during the 25 years since we all lived under the same roof. Maybe it is only after we find ourselves—as did Jacob in the middle of the night—that we might be able to find the other.

So when I read this *sidre*, I want to know only one thing: what is it that Jacob learned in the darkness of night that led him back to his brother Esau?

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SPIEGEL

Leah feel when they realize that they and their mother are less loved? What about the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah? And what of Dinah? She is neither mentioned, nor counted, among Jacob’s children as they are about to enter the land. Midrash explains that she isn’t counted because Jacob hid her in a chest fearing that Esau would see her beauty and desire her. Because of that, the rabbis tell us, she was fated to marry Job. Saved from one bad marriage, thrust into another.

Jacob settles his family in Shechem and NOW DINAH, THE DAUGHTER WHOM LEAH HAD BORNE TO JACOB, WENT OUT TO VISIT THE DAUGHTERS OF THE LAND. SHECHEM SON OF HAMOR...TOOK HER AND LAY WITH HER BY FORCE (Gen. 34.1-2). Why is Dinah described here as Leah’s daughter? Because she “went out”. The same phrase is used when Leah “went out” to tell Jacob that he is to sleep with her, a sexually provocative act, according to the rabbis. So they conclude that Dinah also “went out” in a sexually provocative manner, causing her own rape. In fact Resh Lakish said, “a woman is not immoral until her daughter is immoral.” Thus Leah can be blamed for what happened to Dinah. In the *Tsena U-Rena*, a collection read by generations of Yiddish speaking women, the lesson drawn from this event is that a woman who stays at home avoids trouble; her warmth atones for the sins of her entire household. Today’s women telling this story see an adolescent girl, living in a new community, kept at home among the women, knowing little of other women’s lives. While her brothers leave to tend the flocks, she is confined to the camp. Restless and curious, she goes out to see new sights, make new friends, and unexpectedly encounters Shechem.

SHECHEM IS DRAWN TO DINAH DAUGHTER OF JACOB (note that she is now her father’s daughter, as if the rape were a crime against her father rather than against her)... AND IN LOVE WITH THE MAIDEN, HE SPOKE TO HER TENDERLY (Gen. 34.3-4). While some contemporary versions of this story have Dinah falling in love with Shechem, creating an ancient precursor to the Romeo and Juliet tragedy, the Hebrew clearly says forced sex—rape. We know that many abusive men become contrite and loving after an act of violence, and so it may well have been with Shechem. He tells his father Hamor, “GET ME THIS GIRL AS A WIFE.”

Jacob learned that Shechem HAD DEFILED HIS DAUGHTER... BUT SINCE HIS SONS WERE IN THE FIELD, HE KEPT SILENT UNTIL THEY CAME HOME (34.5). For many women this is the most troubling sentence. Why was Jacob silent? He was not known for his silence or lack of action. Why must he wait for his sons to act? Why was he suddenly helpless? He had great strength when he wrestled with the angel. And what about the women, Leah, Rachel, Bilhah and Zilpah? What did they do? Did they speak to Jacob? Did they search for their missing daughter? How did they feel? There are no clues. We will have to write this story ourselves.

Furious about the treatment of their sister, Jacob’s sons appear to negotiate with Hamor in good faith to arrange the marriage if he, and all of his men, are circumcised. On the third day after the circumcision Simeon and Levi, two of Dinah’s full brothers, went INTO THE CITY UNMOLESTED AND SLEW ALL THE MALES... TOOK DINAH OUT OF SHECHEM’S HOUSE, AND WENT AWAY. THE OTHER SONS CAME UPON THE SLAIN AND PLUNDERED THE TOWN, BECAUSE THEIR SISTER HAD BEEN DEFILED. THEY SEIZED THE FLOCKS...ALL THEIR, CHILDREN, THEIR WIVES AND ALL THAT WAS IN THE HOUSES, THEY TOOK AS CAPTIVES AND BOOTY (34.25-29). Besides the horrors of the murder and

Shalom Bayit

Peace in the Home

*Jewish Values for the New Moon, New Month and New You
Middah for the Hebrew Month of Cheshvan 5774*

Background Texts

**Shalom bayit* means peace in the home. In Judaism, our homes are our *mikdash mial*, our small sanctuary. They are meant to be our greatest source of holiness and peace.

*Jews put a mezuzah on the doorposts of the home in order to remind them of God's presence in their midst. The mezuzah reminds us of the holiness in our homes.

*In the Talmud there is a debate about how the mezuzah should be affixed. Some of the rabbis argue that the mezuzah should be placed horizontally while others argue that it be placed vertically. But ultimately it is placed at an angle because the most important value in Judaism is making compromises so that there can be peace.

*The Rabbis of the Talmud understood that people have a tendency to be less sensitive to their spouses than to those outside of the home. They lose their

temper more often with those closest to them, or take their family members for granted. Hence, the rabbis put the responsibility of keeping peace in the home upon all members of the family, but primarily upon the husband. "If your wife is short," one Talmudic passage teaches, "Bend over to hear her whisper."

*Rabbi David Wolpe, once wrote, that "*shalom bayit* – household harmony – is a treasured value. *Shalom bayit* radiates outward. "One who creates peace at home builds peace in all Israel" said Simeon Ben Gamliel. Goodness inside one's home is no less exalted than greatness outside it."

**Oseh Shalom Bimromahv*, O God who makes peace in the heavens above, among the angels where that peace is not needed, bring peace upon this city and upon the children of our world.

*I do not recall a Jewish home without a book on the table. - Elie Wiesel

Stories from our Sacred Texts Capturing This Value

Genesis 18:1-15

The notion of *Shalom Bayit* emerges from the stories of Abraham and Sarah. Abraham is just recuperating from circumcision when three men, who are actually God's messengers, come to visit Abraham and Sarah in their tent. Abraham and Sarah run to them, greet them, invite them into their home, and quickly provide for them an elegant meal.

While Sarah is in the tent, the angels speak to Abraham and predict that his wife will soon have a son. Sarah, overhearing the conversation laughs. She says, "Now that I am withered, am I to have enjoyment – with my husband so old?"

Stories From our Sacred Texts Continued

When my brother suffers,
I will comfort him.

When my sister is lonely,
I will seek her out.

When my brother seeks
solitude,
I will respect his right to
privacy.

When my sister is attacked,
I will defend her.

When my brother is
oppressed,
I will relieve him.

When my sister is needy,
I will gladly give to her.

When my brother gives to
me,
I will accept graciously from
him.

When my sister prospers,
I will rejoice with her.

The text states: God said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, "Shall I in truth bear a child, old as I am?" Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son."

Sarah had said that she could not have a child because her husband is old. But when God spoke of Sarah's statement to Abraham, God misquoted her as saying that only she was old. According to the Talmud, God changed Sarah's comments to safeguard Abraham's feelings and to preserve domestic peace. In Judaism, this concept of *shalom bayit* allows one to alter the truth, or tell white lies if you will, in order to preserve peace.

Leviticus 14:33-57

The Torah portion, Metzora, speaks about a plague which, when unchecked, has the ability to destroy a home. When we enter the land of Canaan, the text tells us, and God inflicts an eruptive plague upon a house, the owner should go before the priest and say "Something like a plague has appeared upon my house."

The priest shall examine the plague and if the colored streaks go deep into the wall, the house should be closed for seven days. If the plague continues to spread, the priests shall have the stones with the plague upon them pulled out and cast outside the city. The house shall be scraped and re-plastered. But if the plague breaks out again in the house, the house shall be torn down -- it's stones, and timber and all the coating on the house."

Reflections and Discussion

How is your home like a *mikdash miat*, a small sanctuary?

What changes do you need to make in order for your home to be a greater place of holiness and sanctuary?

Elie Wiesel talks about the value of Jewish books in making a home complete. How can Jewish learning bring peace into your home?

In Genesis 18, God alters Sara's words in order to keep peace between Abraham and Sara. In what ways could you alter your language to keep greater peace in your home?

The text from Leviticus speaks of how the ancient plague of leprosy destroyed houses. Today, the modern plague of domestic violence can devastate a home. Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive behavior aimed at gaining and then maintaining power and control over an intimate partner. Domestic violence steals away childhoods. Domestic violence destroys futures. Domestic violence kills self-esteem. Domestic violence ends lives. October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, if you or someone you know needs support, you can find help through Shalombayit-nc.org.



***Shalom Bayit:*¹ Family Conflict & Harmony**

Rabbi Mark Dratch ©

JSafe: The Jewish Institute Supporting an Abuse Free Environment

www.JSafe.org

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Peace is an important, at times the most important value in our lives. No blessing can truly be enjoyed without it. For this reason, all of our blessings end with a prayer for peace.² It gives us the wherewithal and the framework to express, cultivate and enjoy the riches, opportunities, talents and gifts that we have. Without it, strife, stresses, problems, challenges, and obstacles may prevent us from benefiting from and taking advantage of those blessings.

But peace is hard to attain and even harder to maintain. The focus of this discussion is the family and peaceful relations between husbands and wives, parents and children, and brothers and sisters. No family is without its challenges; some more burdened than others. In some households, the lament of the prophet, "Peace, peace; there is no peace" (Jeremiah 6:14, 8:11) might perfectly capture the atmosphere. In others, matters of health, economics, children, or professions, among many other concerns, may test the strongest of commitments and most tolerant and understanding of characters.

Husbands and Wives

The relationship between husbands and wives is the oldest one in human history:

"And the Lord God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helpmeet opposite him'... And the Lord God made Adam fall into a deep sleep, and he slept; and He took one from his ribs, and closed up the flesh. And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her to the man. And Adam said, 'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his

¹ While the proper grammatical construct of this phrase is *shelom bayit*, rather than *shalom bayit*, the incorrect usage is so common that the correct form appears awkward and unusual. Hence, I have decided to use the common form of this phrase in this chapter.

² *Yalkut Shimoni, Parashat Naso, remez 511.*

wife; and they shall be one flesh.” (Gen. 2:18, 21-24)

God Himself is credited with arranging and officiating at the wedding of Adam and Eve³ and it is the happiness of that marriage which is invoked in one of the seven blessings at every Jewish wedding: “May You [God] cause these beloved friends to rejoice just as you caused Your creatures in the Garden of Eden to rejoice.”⁴ Marriage helps to fulfill the existential need for companionship, the species’ need to propagate, and society’s needs to share economic burdens and productivity and to share domestic responsibilities.⁵

Our sages considered this relationship essential to human happiness and fulfillment: “A man who has no wife lives without joy, without blessing, and without goodness.”⁶

But problems between the primordial husband and wife soon ensued: sin, shame, denial of responsibility, assignment of blame, punishment, and exile. And the enduring struggle of husbands and wives to recreate Paradise in their own weed-infested gardens has continued for thousands of years. Despite being “one flesh,” a natural tension exists between individuals who attempt to cultivate the same plot of earth. Differences of temperaments and goals, personalities and egos, philosophies and priorities all contribute to varying degrees of discord.

Rashi elucidates the inherent difficulties in the husband-wife relationship in his explanation of woman’s designation as an *ezer ke-negdo* (a helpmeet opposite [her husband]): “If a [man] merits, she is a helpmeet, if he does not merit, she is opposite him to fight [with him].”⁷ Another rabbinic insight draws attention to this tension. In a fanciful play with the letters of the Hebrew words for man (*ish*: *aleph*, *yud*, *shin*) and woman (*ishah*: *aleph*, *shin*, *hei*), “R. Akiba expounded: ‘When husband and wife

³ *Baba Batra* 75a; *Breishit Rabbah* 8:13.

⁴ *Ketubot* 8a.

⁵ *Yevamot* 61b.

“If [a man] has children, he may abstain from performing the duty of propagation but not from that of living with a wife. This provides support for a statement R. Nahman made in the name of Samuel who ruled that although a man may have many children he must not remain without a wife, for it is said in the Scriptures, “It is not good that the man should be alone.”

See also *Hilkhot Ishut* 15:16. While “a man may not live without a wife... It is permissible for a woman never to marry” (*Hilkhot Isurei Bi’ah* 21:26), nevertheless “a woman should not live without a husband so that she not be suspect [of engaging in an illicit relationship].” (*Hilkhot Ishut* 15:16 and *Even ha-Ezer* 1:13)

⁶ *Yevamot* 62b. See also *Bereishit Rabbah* 17:18 which adds life and atonement to the list.

⁷ Commentary to Genesis 18:18.

are worthy, the *Shekhinah* (Divine Presence) abides with them; when they are not worthy fire consumes them.”⁸ The *yud* and *hei* form the Divine Name. If omitted, only *aleph* and *shin* are left, letters that spell the word *eish* (fire).

Of such great concern was it to find a proper match that in Talmudic times in the Land of Israel they used to ask a man when he got married, “*matza* or *motzei*? (Did you find a good wife or a bad one?)” “*Matza*”, for it is written, “Whoso has found (*matza*) a wife has found a great good.” (Proverbs 18:22); ‘*Motzei*’, for it is written, “And I find the woman (*motzei*) the woman more bitter than death.” (Ecclesiastes 7:26)⁹

Ideally, domestic relationships should not be governed by laws and regulations; they should be natural and reflect the love and respect that should form the basis of those relationships. The Torah, responding to the innate stresses and strains that inevitably arise when two separate and unique individuals attempt to live together, prescribes responsibilities, divisions of labor and mutual respect. These obligations encompass economic, domestic and personal relationships. The Mishnah lists the kinds of work that a woman must perform for her husband: “grinding corn, baking bread, washing clothes, cooking, suckling her child, making ready his bed and working in wool.”¹⁰ These seven are understood to be prototypes and to include many other similar activities.¹¹ Economically, any income that she earns belongs to her husband and goes toward the financial responsibilities of the household.¹² Domestically, she must perform traditional household chores.¹³ Personally, she must provide personal service to him such as making his bed and serving him food.

Similarly, a husband has obligations towards his wife. According to biblical law, he must provide her with maintenance, clothing and conjugal relations.¹⁴ According to rabbinic law, a husband must provide her medical care, ransom her if she is held captive, bury her if she dies, provide for her housing and maintenance in her widowhood, provide child support for their daughters, and provide appropriate

⁸ *Sotah* 17a.

⁹ *Berakhot* 8a.

¹⁰ *Ketubot* 59b. *Hilkhhot Ishut*, ch. 21. Even if a woman has household help that can perform these functions, she must still be involved in some of the housework; see *Hilkhhot Ishut* 21:4.

¹¹ Jerusalem Talmud, *Ketubot* 5:6; *Korban ha-Eidah*

¹² *Even ha-Ezer* 80:1. We will see later that her income is assigned to her husband in exchange for his obligation of providing maintenance.

¹³ *Hilkhhot Ishut* 21:3, 7; *Even ha-Ezer* 80:4. In describing these obligations, Rambam enumerates such duties as washing her husband’s face, hands, and feet, pouring his beverages, making his bed and serving his food

¹⁴ *Ketubot* 47b; *Hilkhhot Ishut* 12:2.

inheritance for their sons.¹⁵ In accepting the obligations of the *ketubah*, a husband undertakes to “work for, esteem, feed, and sustain [her] as is the practice of Jewish men who faithfully work for, esteem, feed, and sustain their wives.”

In addition to the obligations enumerated above, Jewish law calls for love, honor, and respect:

Our Rabbis taught: Concerning a man who loves his wife as himself, who honors her more than himself, who guides his sons and daughters in the right path and arranges for them to be married at a young age, Scripture says, “And thou shalt know that thy tent is in peace.” (Job 5:24)¹⁶

R. ‘Avira used to give the following exposition, sometimes quoting it in the name of R. Ammi and sometimes in the name of R. Assi: What is the meaning of the verse: “Well is it with the man that dealeth graciously, that ordereth his affairs rightfully?” (Psalms 122:5) A man should always eat and drink less than his means allow, clothe himself in accordance with means, and honor his wife and children more than his means allow, for they are dependent upon him and he is dependent upon ‘He who spoke and the world came into being’.¹⁷

Rav said: One should always be heedful of wronging his wife, for since her tears are frequent she is quickly hurt.¹⁸

People say, “If your wife is short, bend down and hear her whisper!”¹⁹

Our Sages commanded that a person should always eat less than what he can afford, should dress in accordance with what he can afford, and extend honor to his wife and children in excess of what he can afford.²⁰

Rambam summarizes:

Our Sages commanded a man to honor his wife more than [he honors] himself and to love her as much as [he loves] himself. If he has financial resources, he should spend generously for her according to his means. He should not instill excessive fear upon her and should speak pleasantly to her. He should not be depressive or angry.

¹⁵ *Hilkhos Ishut* 12:2.

¹⁶ *Yevamot* 62b; *Sanhedrin* 76b.

¹⁷ *Hullin* 84b.

¹⁸ *Baba Metzi’a* 59a.

¹⁹ *Baba Metzi’a* 59a.

²⁰ *Hilkhos De’ot* 5:10.

Likewise, our Sages commanded a woman to honor her husband excessively; his fear should be upon her. She should conduct herself according to his direction and she should view him as a prince or a king. She should follow the desires of his heart and shun anything that he despises. This is the way of the holy daughters and sons of Israel who are pure in their relationships. In these ways will their cohabitation be pleasant and praiseworthy.²¹

These descriptions of the domestic duties required and the subordinate nature of the relationship between husbands and wives grate on many modern ears. Our time is one in which has offered greater equity and autonomy in marital roles and has, in many ways, significantly changed the role of women. Let us analyze these statements in their philosophical, social and halakhic contexts in an attempt to understand the positions and the sensitivities of our tradition. We must be careful when evaluating the sources that no one statement is cited in isolation; doing so would give a skewed and false impression of Jewish tradition and law.

There might have been room for significant criticism had all of the obligations and duties been one-sided, i.e., from wife to husband. However, this is clearly not the case. Jewish marriage is an institution of mutual obligations in which the partners are required to work for the common good, to provide what they are able and to sacrifice what they must in an exchange of reciprocated responsibilities.²² One partner is not subordinate to the other.²³ Haim b. Betzalel, brother of Maharal of Prague, wrote, "A husband should not treat his wife as a servant.... Each of them is a master and each of them is subjugated to the other so that it is impossible to distinguish between them. He acquires her as a servant through the betrothal money and she acquires him as a servant through the dowry that she brings into the marriage."²⁴ Their mutual obligations of respect create a proper balance and prevent abuse and inappropriate control of one over the other. While contemporaries may not express these ideas in these terms, nevertheless, the underlying message is important: marriage is not only about self-fulfillment, it is about reciprocity and being in a mutually beneficial relationship. In the Jewish tradition, the sharing of responsibilities and the balancing of interests in an equitable manner defines the traditional view of this relationship.

Let us consider the domestic obligations prescribed above. Jewish law asserts that many of the marital obligations are not absolutely binding and that, by mutual

²¹ *Hilkhos Ishut* 15:19-20.

²² *She'eilot u-Teshuvot Hatam Sofer, Even ha-Ezer*, II, no. 74; *Hatam Sofer*, Novella to *Baba Batra* 41a. These and other sources are cited in Yosef David Epstein, *Sefer Mitzvot ha-Bayit* (New York, 1981), pp. 119-120.

²³ *She'eilot u-Teshuvot Maharshdam, Even ha-Ezer*, no. 198.

²⁴ *Sefer ha-Haim*, II, ch. 4.

consent, they may be waived. Thus, if a woman relinquishes her claim to maintenance or if a man surrenders his right to her income, these obligations are not mandatory. Such agreements are lawful and legitimate.²⁵ This is true of every aspect of married life with the exceptions of conjugal relations, the 100 or 200 *zuzzim* of the marriage contract (*ikkar ketubah*), and a wife's right of inheritance which may never be waived during the course of a marriage.²⁶ Accordingly, societal norms, or individual husbands and wives themselves, may determine which personal, domestic or monetary responsibilities they may expect from each other. Couples may waive any that are inappropriate for their relationship or the standards of the society²⁷ in which they live. Likewise, in the past, the social standing or economic position of a woman determined the nature and extent of her domestic responsibilities, exempting her from many duties.²⁸ This qualification is certainly sensitive to the norms of society and contemporary mores.²⁹

Finally, Rambam's formulation, i.e., "this is the way of the holy daughters and sons of Israel who are pure in their relationships," indicates that he is not speaking in purely legal terms but is proposing an attitude in relationships that he maintains is the most appropriate. Failure to abide by these standards would not be sufficient grounds for divorce.³⁰

Shalom Bayit

Peaceful and harmonious relations between husband and wife are essential in order for their relationship to thrive and their household to be viable. Married life was meant "for living and not for suffering."³¹ The state of domestic tranquility is

²⁵ *Ketubot* 58b,

R. Huna stated in the name of Rab: A woman is entitled to say to her husband, 'I do not wish either to be maintained by you or to work for you'. He holds the opinion that when the Rabbis regulated [the relations of husband and wife] her maintenance was fundamental while [the assignment of the proceeds of] her handiwork [to her husband] was due [only to their desire for preventing] ill feeling. If, therefore, she said, 'I do not wish either to be maintained by you or to work for you', she is entitled to do so.

See *Hilkhhot Ishut* 12:6; *Even ha-Ezer* 38:5.

²⁶ *Tosafot*, *Ketubot* 63a, s.v. *Rav Huna amar mi-tashmish*; *Hilkhhot Ishut* 12:7-9; *Helkat Mehokek* to *Even ha-Ezer* 80, no. 27.

²⁷ *Hilkhhot Ishut* 21:1.

²⁸ *Hilkhhot Ishut* 21:6; *Even ha-Ezer* 80:8.

²⁹ In commenting on a woman's obligation to recline at the Passover *seder*, *Shulhan Arukh*, *Orah Hayyim* 472:4, remarks that only important women are obligated to do so. Rema comments that all of the women of his day were to be considered "important."

³⁰ *Sefer ha-Makneh* to *Kiddushin* 31a.

³¹ *Ketubot* 61a:

known as *shalom bayit*.

In its original application, concerns of *shalom bayit* motivated activities that removed obstacles and defined parameters of behavior so that people could co-exist safely, effectively and pleasantly. Thus, kindling Shabbat candles was instituted for the sake of *shalom bayit* so that people would not bump into walls or trip on objects that may have been left around the house.³² When forced by limited economic circumstances to choose between lighting Shabbat candles and lighting Chanukah candles, Shabbat candles have priority. This is because Chanukah candles are intended to publicize the miracles of the holiday and no benefit may be derived from them. If they were the only lights, members of the household would be forced to grope in darkness. However, Shabbat candles provide usable light and prevent the distress caused by living in the dark;³³ concerns of *shalom bayit* have priority.³⁴ The Shabbat lights also enable people to sit around a table and eat their meal in the proper atmosphere.³⁵ In addition, when financial concerns are not an issue, lighting many candles on Shabbat is encouraged as increased light “increases domestic tranquility

R. Huna related: R. Huna b. Hinena tested us [with the following question:] If [a wife] says that she wishes to nurse her child and he says that she shall not nurse it her, wish is to be granted, for she would be the sufferer. What, [however, is the law] where he says that she shall suckle the child and she says that she will not suckle it? Whenever this is not the practice in her family we, of course, comply with her wish; what, [however, is the law] where this is the practice in her family but not in his? Do we follow the practice of his family or that of hers? And we solved his problem from this: She rises with him but does not go down with him (i.e., she enjoys his advantages but does not suffer his disadvantages). What, said R. Huna, is the Scriptural proof? — For she is a man's wife, [she is to participate] in the rise of her husband but not in his descent. R. Eleazar said, [The proof is] from here: Because she was the mother of all living, she was given [to her husband] to live but not to suffer pain.

³² *Magen Avraham to Orah Hayyim* 263:13. *Magen Avraham* is commenting on the obligation of single students who are living away from home to light Shabbat candles. Thus, *shalom bayit* is not limited to marital relationships, but to domestic safety and tranquility.

³³ Rashi, *Kiddushin* 23b, s.v. *shelom beito*. *Shabbat* 25b,

“And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace; I forgot prosperity. What is the meaning of, ‘and thou hast removed my soul far off from peace’ (Lamentations 3:17)? R. Abbahu said: This refers to the kindling of the light on the Sabbath.” (Jeremiah laments that they could not even afford this; loss of light brings loss of peace.)

³⁴ *Shabbat* 23b.

³⁵ *She'iltot, Parashat Tetzaveh*, no. 63.

and increases happiness.”³⁶

Concerns for domestic tranquility prompted our Sages to caution husbands and wives to act sensitively and responsibly towards each other. In order to avoid discord in matters of finances, a significant source of conflict between husbands and wives,³⁷ the rabbis regulated responsibility for and expenditures of domestic finances and, at times, limited the ability of one party or another to disburse or control funds unilaterally.³⁸

A woman is legally exempt from financial liability for any damage she may cause to household utensils and furnishings, for otherwise, Rambam explains, “there would never be domestic tranquility but, rather, she would be overly cautious and refrain from domestic chores, and there would be strife between them.”³⁹ *Pele Yo-eitz* counsels that, for the sake of domestic tranquility, a husband should not be too demanding and exacting concerning the household budget.⁴⁰ Quoting Proverbs 15:17, “Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a fatted ox and hatred with it” and Proverbs 17:1, “Better is a dry morsel, and quietness with it, than a house full of feasting with quarrels,” *Sefer Hassidim* warns that it is better to be satisfied with a modest Shabbat meal if doing so will reduce economic pressures and the resulting tensions and quarrels between husband and wife. Real *oneg Shabbat* (Sabbath delight), he writes, is the absence of disputes.⁴¹

One spouse may not repressively limit the actions the other, as that would be

³⁶ *Bet Yosef, Orah Hayyim* 263:17. Likewise, according to Rosh, *Yoma*, ch. 8, no. 27, a blessing is made upon lighting candles for Yom Kippur because of *shalom bayit*; *Magen Avraham* to *Orah Hayyim* 263:15. See *Bet Yosef, Orah Hayyim* 610:2 for a record of the debate concerning the recitation of a blessing under these circumstances.

³⁷ *Baba Metzia* 59a:

Rav Yehudah said: One should always take heed that there be food in his house; for strife is prevalent in a house on account of [the lack of] food, for it is written, “He makes peace in your borders; He fills you with cream of wheat” (Psalms 147:14). Said R. Papa, Hence the proverb: When the barley is quite gone from the pitcher, strife comes knocking at the door.

³⁸ *Hilkhhot Ishut* 22:18; *Even ha-Ezer* 90:16.

³⁹ *Hilkhhot Ishut* 21:9.

⁴⁰ *Pele Yo-eitz, erekh ahavat ish ve-ishah. Bemidbar Rabbah* 9:2 warns that a man should not be exacting and demanding at home and not to cry over spilled wine. See also *Megilah* 28a,

R. Nehunia b. ha-Kaneh was asked by his disciples: In virtue of what have you reached such a good old age? He replied: Never in my life have I sought respect through the degradation of my fellow, nor has the curse of my fellow gone up with me upon my bed, and I have been yielding with my money.

⁴¹ *Sefer Hassidim*, no. 863.

similar to imprisonment⁴² and is a form of abuse.⁴³ The Talmud castigates Papus b. Yehudah who was so suspicious and controlling that, when he would leave the house, he would lock his wife indoors.⁴⁴ Similarly, a husband may not restrict his wife's customary interactions with her neighbors:

R. Kahana stated: If a man placed his wife under a vow that she shall neither borrow nor lend a winnow, a sieve, a mill or an oven, he must divorce her and give her also her *ketubah*, because [should she fulfill the vow] he would give her a bad name among her neighbors.⁴⁵

Husbands and wives must be compatible with each other and, if unable to coexist, they should separate. The Talmud states, "No one can be compelled to live with a snake in a single basket."⁴⁶ It is for this reason that proper efforts must be made before a marriage to ensure that the man and woman are compatible with each other and can live together. Thus,

Rab Judah said in the name of Rab: A man may not betroth a woman before he sees her, lest he [subsequently] see something repulsive in

⁴² *Yoreh De'ah* 235:6,

A husband who says to his wife, "I forbid you to go to your father's house or that your father's house is (*konam*) off-limits to you" [is as if he] says nothing."

This, despite the Mishnah, *Ketubot* 71b,

If a man forbade his wife by vow that she shall not go to her father's house, and he lives with her in the same town, he may keep [her as his wife, if the prohibition was for] one month; but if for two months, he must divorce her and give her also the *ketubah*. Where he, however, lives in another town, he may keep [her as his wife, if the prohibition was for] one festival, [but if for] three festivals, he must divorce her and give her her *ketubah*. If a man forbade his wife by vow that she should not visit a house of mourning or a house of feasting, he must divorce her and give her her *ketubah*, because thereby he has closed [people's doors] against her. If he pleads, however, [that his action] was due to some other cause he is permitted [to forbid her].

⁴³ *Yoreh De'ah* 234:62.

⁴⁴ *Gittin* 90a. See Rashi, s.v. *Papus b. Yehudah*.

⁴⁵ *Ketubot* 72a; *Hilkhot Ishut* 13:10; *Yoreh De'ah* 235:5.

⁴⁶ *Ketubot* 72a, 77a, 86b,

Rav stated: If a husband says, "I will neither maintain nor support [my wife]," he must divorce her and pay her *ketubah*. R. Eleazar went and told this reported statement to Samuel [who] exclaimed, "Make Eleazar eat barley; rather than compel him to divorce her let him be compelled to maintain her." And Rav? [Why does he order divorce rather than maintenance?] No one can live with a serpent in the same basket.

her, and she become loathsome to him, whereas the All-Merciful said, “And thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” (Leviticus 19:18)⁴⁷

Physical, sexual and emotional abuse is absolutely prohibited. Couples must be respectful of each other’s dignities, bodies and sensitivities. “Rav said: One should always be heedful of wronging his wife, for since her tears are frequent she is quickly hurt.”⁴⁸ They should speak pleasantly and politely to each other and curb their anger.⁴⁹ R. Meir warns that “whoever marries his daughter to an ‘*am ha-aretz*’ (ignorant, uncouth person), is as though he bound and laid her before a lion: just as a lion tears [his prey] and devours it and has no shame, so an ‘*am ha-aretz*’ strikes and cohabits and has no shame.”⁵⁰ The *herem* instituted by thirteenth century R. Peretz b. Eliyahu of Corbeil against any man who beats his wife⁵¹ is one of many such pieces of legislation and decrees against this type of behavior.⁵²

It is forbidden for a couple to engage in intimate relations in a state of anger or disagreement⁵³ or to force one’s spouse to be intimate when she is unwilling.⁵⁴

⁴⁷ *Kiddushin* 41a. This may be another explanation for the *bedeken* that takes place prior to the wedding ceremony.

⁴⁸ *Baba Metzi’a* 59b.

⁴⁹ *Gittin* 6b:

R. Hisda said: A man should never intimidate his household. The concubine of Giv’ah was terrorized by her husband and she was the cause of many thousands being slaughtered in Israel. Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav: If a man intimidate his household, he will eventually commit the three sins of unchastity, blood shedding, and desecration of the Sabbath. Said Rabbah bar Bar Hanah “When our Sages said that a man should ask three things of his household before Shabbat: ‘Did you tithe, did you make the *eruv*, did you light the candle,’ they meant that he should say it with sensitivity, so that it be acceptable to them.” Said Rabbi Ashi “I never heard these words of Rabbah bar Bar Hanah, but I have acted similarly based on my own reasoning.”

⁵⁰ *Pesahim* 49b.

⁵¹ Quoted in *She’eilot u-Teshuvot Binyamin Ze’ev*, no. 88.

⁵² See also *She’eilot u-Teshuvot Maharam mi-Rotenberg*, IV, no. 927; *Bet Yosef, Even ha-Ezer* 154:15; *Sha’arei Teshuvah* III, 77; *She’eilot u-Teshuvot Tashbetz* II, no. 8; *She’eilot u-Teshuvot Maharshakh*, II, no. 130; R. Hayyim Palaggi, *Sefer Hayyim ve-Shalom*, II, *Even ha-Ezer*, no. 31;

⁵³ *Orah Hayyim* 240:10; *Hokhmat Adam* 128:6.

⁵⁴ *Eiruvim* 100b,

Rami b. Hama citing R. Assi further ruled: A man is forbidden to compel his wife to the [marital] obligation, since it is said in Scripture: “And he that hasteth with his feet sinneth.” (Proverbs 19:2) R. Joshua b. Levi similarly stated: Whosoever compels his wife to the [marital] obligation will have unworthy children. Said R. Ika b. Hinena: What is the Scriptural proof?

Judaism always recognized and outlawed marital rape. One should always speak pleasantly and kindly and never terrify or intimidate the members of the household. A person should be gentle.⁵⁵ When R. Ada Bar Ahava was asked by his students to what he attributed his extraordinarily long life he mentioned, among other factors, "I was never stern within my house."⁵⁶

It is obvious from our discussion that maintaining *shalom bayit* is the responsibility of both husbands and wives. Each partner in his or her own way must act respectfully and appropriately toward the other. And when the relationship is in serious trouble and the couple cannot resolve its own issues, others bear the onus of restoring their *shalom bayit* and must intervene appropriately when necessary, and refrain from intervening when doing so would be counterproductive.⁵⁷ Of such great importance is the restoration of *shalom bayit* that God Himself allows His Name to be blotted out by the *sotah* waters for establishing harmony between husband and wife.⁵⁸

As a means of endearing Abraham's wife to him, the angels who visited Abraham to announce the birth of Isaac, inquired about Sarah. (Genesis 18) "Rav Yehudah said in Rav's name: 'The Ministering Angels knew that our mother Sarah was in the tent, but why [bring out the fact that she was] in her tent? In order to make her beloved to her husband.'"⁵⁹ Aaron was identified as a lover and pursuer of peace and distinguished himself by reconciling married couples that were at odds with each

"Also without consent the soul is hot good." (*ibid.*)

Even ha-Ezer 25:2. *Magen Avraham*, no. 27 extends this restriction beyond the case of rape to any situation in which a woman is not fully agreeable to engage in intimate relations.

Nedarim 20b,

And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me." (Ezekiel 20:38) R. Levi said: This refers to children belonging to the following nine categories: children of fear (when a husband imposes himself upon his wife by force), of outrage, of a hated wife, one under a ban (a person under a ban was forbidden to cohabit), of a woman mistaken for another (having intended to cohabit with one of his wives, he cohabited with another), of strife (one with whom he had just quarreled), of intoxication [during intercourse], of a mentally divorced wife (when her husband has decided to divorce her), of promiscuity, and of a brazen woman (one who openly demands her conjugal rights).

⁵⁵ *Ta'anit* 4a,

Rabina said: Despite this, a man should train himself to be gentle, for it is said, "Therefore remove anger from thy heart." (Ecclesiastes 11:10)

⁵⁶ *Ta'anit* 20b.

⁵⁷ *Sedei Hemed*, *Aseifat Dinim*, *Ma'arekhet Hei*, no. 5.

⁵⁸ *Shabbat* 116a; *Sukkah* 53b; *Nedarim* 66b; *Makkot* 11a.

⁵⁹ *Baba Metzi'a* 87a.

other.⁶⁰ And the Talmudic Sage R. Meir asked a woman to spit into his eye in order to reconcile her with her husband.⁶¹ Based on the Talmudic account of two jesters who were identified by Elijah the Prophet as having a share in the World-to-Come because “when we see two people quarrelling we strive hard to make peace between them,”⁶² Rabbeinu Yonah writes that every Jewish community should appoint such people to bring peace between husbands and wives.⁶³

Marital harmony is of such great import that it is permitted, at times, to be less than straight in one’s dealings. It is permissible to offer insincere flattery to one’s wife for the sake of peace.⁶⁴ It is permissible to deviate from the truth in order to restore *shalom bayit*.⁶⁵ Even God Himself was less than straightforward when He repeated Sarah’s comment to her husband, Abraham. After hearing the news of her impending pregnancy, “Sarah laughed within herself, saying, ‘After I am grown old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?’” (Genesis 18:12) When God related the event to Abraham, He said, “Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’” (18:13)⁶⁶

Nevertheless, there are limits to the moral compromises that may be made. The Talmud relates the following story:

Rav was constantly tormented by his wife. If he told her, ‘Prepare me lentils’, she would prepare him small peas; [and if he asked for] small peas, she prepared him lentils. When his son Hiyya grew up he gave her [his father’s instruction] in the reverse order. ‘Your mother’, Rav once remarked to him, ‘has improved!’ ‘It was I,’ the other replied, ‘who reversed [your orders] to her.’ ‘This is what people say’, the first said to him, ‘Thine own offspring teaches thee reason’; you, however, must not continue to do so’ for it is said, “They have taught their tongue to speak lies, they weary themselves.” (Jeremiah 9:4)

Great religious decisors often factored in concerns of *shalom bayit* when determining matters of Jewish law, especially in matters of *taharat ha-mishpahah* (Jewish family purity), and found leniencies in order to protect and enhance the relationship between husbands and wives.⁶⁷

⁶⁰ *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*, Horev, ch. 17.

⁶¹ Jerusalem Talmud, *Sotah* 1:4; *Devarim Rabbah*, *parashah* 5, 15.

⁶² *Ta’anit* 20b.

⁶³ *Iggeret ha-Teshuvah*, day two.

⁶⁴ *Otzar ha-Midrashim*, Eisenstein, p. 222.

⁶⁵ See my “Nothing But the Truth?” *Judaism* 37:2, Spring 1998.

⁶⁶ *Yevamot* 65b.

⁶⁷ See, for example, *She’eilot u-Teshuvot Tzitz Eliezer* 6:20, 10:13; *She’eilot u-Teshuvot Yabi’a Omer*, VIII, *Yoreh De’ah*, no. 32.

A Closing Thought

In the prayer for peace at the end of the *kaddish*, we take three steps back, bow to the left and bow to the right as we recite, “He Who made peace in the heavens, may He make peace for us and for all Israel.” In explaining this unique practice of stepping backwards during this prayer, Rabbi Menahem Sacks, of blessed memory, suggested that our actions teach us a vital lesson. If we truly want to achieve peace, then we cannot remain fixed to our spots, unyielding in our convictions and inflexible in our understanding. We need to pause, step back and take a new view of our situation. We need to look at it from different perspectives, from the right and from the left, and reevaluate who we are, what we believe and what we are doing. Then, and only then, might we have a chance to achieve peace. This discussion gives us an opportunity to step back and reevaluate our most basic and significant relationships in new ways. It culls the wisdom and insights of the Torah and our sages, a Torah whose “ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace” (Proverbs 3:17) , may they help us maintain homes, families and relationships that are pleasant and peaceful.

