YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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**The Philosophy of Manitou**

**Rav Uriel Eitam**

**Shiur #14: The Marital Relationship in Light of the Fraternity Equation**

In this *shiur*, we will explore the way in which the "fraternity equation" is reflected in the marital relationship.

Adam and Chava are the first couple that we encounter in the Torah. The first verse that describes the creation of man teaches:

And God created man in His image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (*Bereishit* 1:27)

Manitou draws our attention to the terms that the Torah uses in defining the first couple. The terms "male" and "female" are used not only in relation to human beings, but also in relation to animals; they belong to the entirety of the natural, biological realm. Indeed, the drive to engage in sexual relations and reproduce is a natural phenomenon that is common to all of the animal kingdom.

In the next chapter of *Sefer Bereishit*, we find a description of Adam and Chava from a different perspective:

And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; and He took one of his sides, and closed up the flesh in its place. And the Lord God built up the side which He had taken from the man, making a woman, and He brought her to the man. And the man said: “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman (Isha), for this one was taken from man.” Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh. (*Bereishit* 2:21-24)

Here the "male and female" are given new names: "man and woman." These are names that are not shared by animals; they belong exclusively to the human realm, and as such express a more elevated state. These names are given after a process that *Chazal* describe as the separation of Man (Adam) into two separate entities. Each is part of a whole and hence deficient by definition.

Manitou adopts the approach of Maharal, who elaborates on man’s deficiency as opposed to an animal. The Hebrew word for animal, *behema*, can be broken into two words, “*bah mah*,” suggesting that its entire essence is manifest in actuality. Following the separation, in contrast, man is missing something and seeks wholeness. As previously explained, the gap between man's deficient state and the aspiration for perfection is what produces history – the course and movement towards ultimate completion. There is human history on the grand scale and personal history on the individual level; humanity in general has a purpose, and each person has his own purpose. But in the case of Adam and Chava, the general purpose and the individual purpose are one and the same.

What is the significance of man’s deficiency? There is a connection between man and that which he lacks. His deficiency is what forms his identity and points to the values that will be central to his life and his world. A person seeks that which he is missing in order to become complete. It will not be a static completeness, like that of God, but rather a constant movement towards completion, and what facilitates this movement is the other person alongside him, who possesses exactly what it is that he lacks. In the shift from a complete “Adam” to two entities that complement one another, male and female rise to the level of “man and woman” – from the biological level to the moral one:

The categories “male and female” describe a very low level of relations between the sexes: the physiological level, principally for the purpose of reproduction. When Adam gives his wife a name, there is very significant progress. It happens in two stages: first she is called “woman” (*isha*), 'for this one was taken from man (*me-ish*)’'; later she is called “Chava,” “for she was the mother of all life.” The *midrash* notes this progress in its use of the phrase “face to face.” (*Sod Midrash Ha-Toladot* I)

According to the Torah, marriage revolves around the moral question of how to encounter the other. Is it an encounter driven by the natural urges of “male and female,” or is it a moral encounter between “man and woman”? Although the two options might seem almost the same, they are actually very different. A “male” follows his natural instincts; even when he is interacting with the other, he does not “feel” the other. For example, the male courting of females in the animal kingdom seems similar to a man's courting of a woman, but in fact they are very different. A peacock courting a pea-hen, while appearing to show this particular specimen special attention, feels only its own biological urge. In contrast, a man who engages in real courting is sensitive towards the woman and orientates himself towards her mood and feelings.

Even when a person's behavior appears polite and civilized, his inner orientation can still be the same as that of an animal – i.e., focused solely on his male biological drive to “conquer” the female, rather than acknowledging her and giving her space. (A husband's attitude towards his wife as though her entire purpose is to take care of all the housework for him would manifest the same general attitude of domination.) The Torah demands that we elevate ourselves beyond this level. It is for this reason that betrothal, according to the Torah, requires the woman's agreement. The woman is not “acquired” from some third party, but in fact from herself – her own willingness. Thus, the betrothal depends completely on her.

**Realization of the Fraternity Equation in the Marital Relationship**

This understanding brings us back to the fraternity equation that we discussed previously. The fundamental question underlying the equation is how two sides can coexist. The basis of Creation is the constriction of Divine manifestation so as to create a situation of duality – God and the world. In the story of Kayin and Hevel, we encounter the challenge of duality within humanity itself. But as discussed above, even before Kayin and Hevel came along, there were Adam and Chava. Duality is manifest in the form of man and woman, who can conduct themselves like the "male and female" that exist in the animal kingdom, but who are also capable of creating a human connection. As long as a person operates within the marital relationship just for his own needs, he is stuck on the level of the animal kingdom.

Human relationships are moral (not just biological) relationships, meaning that each side makes room for the other. The most fundamental – and also the most intensive – laboratory for developing human morality and the ability to make room for the other is marriage:

The purpose of the separation of Adam into man and woman is the building of a relationship between the couple so that they can experience what otherness is, and to conduct their relationship as the most meaningful example of the encounter between myself and the other – what I refer to as the “fraternity equation.” The way in which I conduct this relationship, on all its levels, reflects the degree of my morality. Of course, there is room in this relationship for happiness: happiness at allowing my “other” to complete and perfect him/herself. (*Sod Midrash Ha-Toladot* I, p. 141)

What is the man missing, and what is the woman missing, after they are separated? According to the description in the Torah, the woman is missing bone. The man, according to Manitou, is missing his life force (*nefesh*), as Avraham says to Sarah: "… that my soul may live (*ve-chayta nafshi*) on your account" (*Bereishit* 12:13). The man is missing his life force, as it were, and he seeks it. The life force lies with the woman, which is why she has the power to produce new life, to give birth. The duality of man and woman is profound and essential; each side possesses that which the other is missing. The man provides stability; the woman brings the “soul” and depth. But before looking at the differences in more detail, it is important that we establish the fundamental idea that each side possesses something that the other does not.

**Betrothal and Marriage vs. “Desire”**

Further on in the Torah, we find examples of relationships that remain at the level of “male and female” without becoming “man and woman.” Such relations are referred to as “desire,” as, for example, in the case of Shekhem and Dina and in the law of the beautiful woman captured in war. Concerning Shekhem, we read, “and his soul **desires** your daughter” (*Bereishit* 34:8). Shekhem does not see the human being in front of him; what he sees is his own desire for her. What he seeks is not to acknowledge the other, but rather to conquer her. The idea of conquest is also the background to the law of the “*yefat* *toar*”: “and you see among the captives a woman of beautiful appearance, and you **desire** her” (*Devarim* 21:11). Here, the instruction of the Torah is, “You shall take her for yourself as a wife” (ibid.) – i.e., not to remain at the level of “desire”. The man is commanded to bring the woman into his home and keep her there for a month, during which time he is to care for her while she cries for her father and mother. What happens during this month? Perhaps the woman will come to seem burdensome to him; on the other hand, perhaps he will feel her pain and identify with her humanity. What is certain, in any event, is that his desire will cool off, and their relationship will be built not on mere sexual drive and conquest, but on patience and awareness. If, after a month, the man discovers that his interest in the woman has waned, the Torah says, “you shall let her go where she will, but you shall not sell her at all for money” (ibid. v. 14). She is not his property; she is a living human being.

The law of the “*yefat toar*” concerns a specific, unusual instance and does not represent the Torah’s normative guidance. The ideal path is betrothal and marriage – but even within a marriage, the same principle that we learn from the “*yefat t*o*’ar*” needs to be implemented. A man must not marry a woman – even in a proper wedding, *ke-dat Moshe ve-Yisrael* – and then treat her as a captive or a servant, focusing only on his own drives and interests. The year-long period that, in times gone by, separated the betrothal from the wedding, was intended, among other things, to elevate the initial desire to a love that was accompanied by respect.

**The Relationships of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs: Discourse, Fraternity, and Love**

As opposed to a situation of subjugation to natural urges and dictates, the Torah points to the relationships of the patriarchs and matriarchs as a source of inspiration. While there is no recorded dialogue between Adam and Chava, we do find dialogue between Avraham and Sara.

If a couple shares no dialogue, they are merely living alongside each other. Until God separated them, male and female existed back-to-back as Adam. After their separation, they stood alongside each other. Avraham and Sara introduce a new stage – a relationship that is face to face. Manitou’s analysis sheds new light on other biblical narratives. He maintains that when Avraham told Pharaoh that Sara was his sister – and likewise later on, when Yitzchak made a similar claim concerning Rivka – it was not a lie told simply to save his life, but an expression of something true and real. Avraham and Sara indeed achieved a fraternal closeness – a level that was new to mankind:

In order to spread God’s true word, Avraham and Sara had to elevate their relationship from the level of “man-woman” to a new level of “brother-sister.” Moreover, this was the beginning of real dialogue between Avraham and Sarah. This is the first dialogue between man and woman in the Torah. It is an altogether revolutionary concept, a huge leap in human progress. This *parsha* sees only the beginning of the dialogue; it reaches its climax in chapter 20, in the words of Avimelekh: “Did he not say to me, She is my sister, and also she said, He is my brother….” So long as Avraham had not declared Sara to be his sister, his soul was not yet truly alive. Avraham’s soul needed repair – completion. This would be possible only when he achieved the level of “brother-sister.” He needed Sarah to say, “He is my brother.” Then Avraham’s life force, which is the connection of the body with the soul, came alive – beyond just his physical existence.” (*Sod Midrash Ha-Toladot* I)

In the case of Yitzchak and Rivka we see that the relationship represents the completion of a most essential deficiency. Yitzchak embodies the trait of “*din*” (strict justice), while Rivka epitomizes the trait of “*chesed*” (lovingkindness), giving manifest expression to the ideal of “making room for the other”: “Also room to lodge in” (*Bereishit* 24:25) – Rivka makes room in her parents’ home for Avraham’s servant. This concept, like other processes that Manitou notes, develops gradually over the course of *Sefer Bereishit*: Avram, arriving in Egypt, says of Sarah that she is his sister. Later on, in the land of the Pelishtim, there is reciprocity: Avraham says that Sara is his sister, and Sara says of Avraham that he is her brother. In the case of Yitzchak, the Torah mentions love, but it sprouts in the context of the vacuum left by the death of his mother: “And he loved her, and Yitzchak was comforted after his mother’s death” (24:67). By the time we reach the story of Yaakov and Rachel, the Torah speaks of an absolute love: “And Yaakov loved Rachel” – a perfected love that is not dependent on or compensating for something else. Manitou notes, based on historical sources, that the Pharaohs used to marry their sisters – i.e., a natural sister became a wife. Avraham and Sara bring a new concept to Egypt: a wife, who is “other,” can become like a natural sister.

Translated by Kaeren Fish