

Honey, You Look Like a Million Dollars

PARSHA INSIGHTS - LECH L'CHA (5759)

WEALTH COMES BECAUSE OF THE WIFE

Rabbi Chelbo said, “A person must always be careful in honoring his wife, since a blessing is only found in a man’s house because of his wife” (*Gemara Bava Metzia* 59A). The proof to this remarkable statement is in today’s *parsha* [Torah portion]. When Avram left the land of Canaan because of the famine, and he arrived in Egypt, the Egyptians observed that Sarai was quite beautiful. Paroh’s officials reported this, and she was taken to Paroh’s palace (12:14-15). The Torah says that Paroh “treated Avram well FOR HER SAKE, and he acquired sheep, cattle, donkeys, servants and maidservants, female donkeys, and camels” (12:16). The message is that Paroh presented Avram with bountiful gifts because of Sarai. The *Gemara* derives that in general, Hashem bestows kindness and *bracha* [blessing] on a husband and the entire household FOR THE SAKE OF the woman of the house. How do *Chazal* [our Sages] learn this from our *pasuk* [verse]?

The *Maharsha*, commentary on the *Gemara*, clarifies the matter. The *pasuk* does not say WHO treated Avram well because of Sarai. Rather, it simply states that “HE (someone unnamed) treated Avram well for her sake...” *Maharsha* explains that the simple interpretation (stated by *Rashi* on our *pasuk*) is that it refers to Paroh, the one just mentioned in the preceding *pasuk*. But the deeper *pshat* [meaning] is that it hints to Hashem. In other words, the One who has the ability to treat all people as He pleases, the Master of the Universe, treated Avram well BECAUSE OF HIS WIFE, SARAI. We thus deduce that in general, a righteous wife brings heavenly *brachos* [blessings] upon her household. Hashem is the One who sees to it that this comes true.

The *Iyun Yaacov* remarks that because of this idea, the sage, Rabbi Yosi, would consider his wife to be “his house”. The existence of a blessed house was attributed to her, so she was said to be the actual *bayis* [house]. The *Iyun Yaacov* cites the *Gemara Yevamos* 62B: One who lives without a wife is missing *bracha*, genuine blessings. This is the same idea expressed by our *Gemara Bava Metzia* 59A, that blessings are only found in a house because of the wife. In addition, let us study a *pasuk* in *Koheles* [Ecclesiastes] that sheds much light on this concept.

“See life with a woman whom you have loved...” (*Koheles* 9:9). Place a dash after the word “life”. See life (if you want to see life, it must be...) with a woman whom you have loved. This is stating that if you want life in its true sense and quality, it has to happen “with a woman whom you have loved”. The *Midrash Rabba* comments in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levi: “Anyone living without a wife is living without life.” In short, the *Midrash* is saying— no wife, no life! We see that not only are blessings missing without a wife; life itself is lacking in her absence.

Our discussion began with a *pasuk* in today’s *parsha*. Hashem granted Avram abundant wealth and prestige for the sake of Sarai. The Torah’s message is that the situation is the same in general, not only by our forefathers and mothers. A house is blessed largely because of the wife. The *avos* [forefathers] and *imahos* [foremothers] set the standard; they were the prototype for their descendants. One would hope that husbands and wives always treat each other with great respect, but human beings need periodic reminders. Let us be inspired by the above mentioned words of *Chazal* to put this into practice IMMEDIATELY. If a husband does not agree with a statement or opinion of his wife, he should converse with her about it in a polite fashion. This goes both ways, but the emphasis of our *pasuk* is on the husband’s obligation. Husbands, please take the advice of the sage *Rava*, found on *Bava Metzia* 59A: “Honor your wives so that you will be prosperous!”

By Rabbi Moshe Heigh

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