



לקוטי שיחות
PROJECT
LIKKUTEI
SICHOS

Sicha Summary

Chelek 19 | Tu B'Av

The Talmud:

The final Mishnah of tractate *Taanis* states:

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said: There were no days as joyous for the Jewish people as the fifteenth of Av and Yom Kippur, for on these days, the daughters of Jerusalem would go out in white clothes... and dance in the vineyards. And what would they say? Young man, please lift up your eyes and see what you choose for yourself. Do not set your eyes toward beauty, but set your eyes toward family.... (*Taanis* 26b)

The Talmud cites a *beraisa* that elaborates on this rendezvous:

What would the beautiful women among them say? Set your eyes toward beauty.... What would those of distinguished lineage among them say? Set your eyes toward family.... What would the ugly ones among them say? Choose your wife for the sake of Heaven.... (*Ibid*, 31a)

The Question:

If, as the *beraisa* teaches, only those with distinguished lineage would say, “set your eyes toward family,” how could the mishnah make a blanket statement that all the women said, “set your eyes toward a good family”? Surely not all the women came from distinguished lineage!

The Preface to the Explanation:

Following the *beraisa*, the tractate concludes with a statement related to the topic of dancing:

In the Future Era, the Holy One, blessed is He, will arrange a dance of the righteous, and He will be sitting among them in the Garden of Eden, and each and every one will point to G-d with his finger, as it says: “And it shall be said on that day: Behold, this is our G-d, for whom we waited.... (*Ibid* 31a)

Rashi and Tosfos disagree regarding a nuance in this description:

Rashi maintains that the righteous will point to G-d with their finger and say the verse, “Behold, this is our G-d, for whom we waited.”

Tosfos maintains that the righteous will only point to G-d, but they will not recite anything. The verse cited in the Talmud is simply a proof-text that the righteous will be able to identify G-d clearly.

What is the deeper significance to this debate?

The Explanation:

This encounter of the daughters of Jerusalem with the young men was grounded in modesty and authenticity. The potential brides were proclaiming their spiritual value and the qualities which made them desirable.

Each girl had two qualities — her particular, individual personality and traits, and the fundamental quality that she shared with all the other girls.

The mishnah speaks of the quality that all the women shared — their essential purity and fear of Heaven that they inherited from the Matriarchs. This quality is rooted in their shared origins. And so they instruct the young men to “please lift up your eyes and... set your eyes toward family.” Look upwards, to the (spiritual) source of every Jewish girl, and see that she emerges from a “good family” — from the family of Sarah, Rachel, Rivkah, and Leah, who are the ultimate good family.

The beraisa speaks of the particular qualities of each girl. And therefore, each category of women says something different. The ones blessed with spiritual beauty and sophistication say, “set your eyes toward beauty.” The ones who came from a specific family that historically excelled in good deeds said, “set your eyes toward family.” The “ugly ones” were those who did not have spiritual beauty in a way that was discernible, nor did they come from families with a history of a strong spiritual heritage. But their own deprivation drove them to seek out G-d with more intensity, and to submit themselves to Him unequivocally. They searched for husbands who were not looking for superficial qualities, but for those who were sincere, who would “choose their wife for the sake of Heaven.”

Circle Unity:

The daughters of Jerusalem danced in a circle that had no beginning or end, alluding to their state of unity. In the mishnah, this unity is expressed in the fact that they all derive from one source — from the Matriarchs. And in the beraisa, this unity is expressed in their all having diverse qualities, yet still uniting together to form one cohesive whole — one circle.

This leads to the conclusion of the tractate which discusses the circular dance of the righteous in the World to Come. Each of them will point to G-d with their finger, meaning, each of them will perceive G-d according to their own ability and perspective. Yet they will still dance in one circle, just like the brides who each have distinct qualities, yet complete each other by dancing in one circle.

But this unity of differences can occur in two ways.

Rashi says they will each “speak” to one another, meaning, each righteous person will convey his experience to the others. This is integrative unity, where each distinct level complements, and is entwined with, the other.

Tosfos says they will point to G-d, but they will remain silent. The circle alludes to infinity, and in spiritual terms, this refers to the limitless essence of each righteous person’s unique soul. When the “circle” of each person’s

soul is expressed, there is no space for integrative unity, because the particular qualities and strengths of each person are not manifest; only the undefinable essence is expressed. The unity, therefore, is one that results from all differences and differentiation melting in the presence of G-d.