

Seitzei: A Heavenly Marriage

Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

From the passage in the Torah portion of *Seitzei*:¹ “When a man takes a wife and lives with her ... and she goes out ... and she becomes...,” we learn² that a man may marry his wife either with money, with a marriage document, or by having marital relations. Although all three forms are valid, the prevailing custom is to acquire a wife with money (*keseif*), or with an object that has monetary value (*shavah keseif*).³

There are two ways of viewing the obtaining of a wife with money: that the woman acquires the money, and through this acquisition becomes married, or that by becoming married, she acquires the money that is given her.⁴

In a spiritual context, these two views have equal validity. For in the mystical sense, the phrase “a wife is acquired by her husband”⁵ refers to the union of G-d and the Jewish people.⁶

Just as in a physical marriage there are the joint aspects⁷ of the husband’s acquisition of his wife and her concomitant prohibition to anyone else, so too with regard to the marriage of G-d and the Jews.⁸ The Jewish people cling to G-d, and are simultaneously separated from mundane pleasures that would impinge on this relationship.

And just as in a physical marriage these two aspects cannot be separated, so it is in the spiritual marriage of G-d and the Jews. In the words of *Chovos HaLevavos*:⁹ “It is impossible to implant love of G-d within our hearts while love of this world resides within us.”

In light of the above, we can understand the inner reason for the prevailing custom of marrying with money or an object that has monetary value. For the Hebrew word for money, *keseif*, is also indicative of love and desire — the spiritual service of love of G-d¹⁰ — the main purpose of which is to achieve union with Him.

We can also understand how both above-mentioned views of marriage — that through the acquisition of money the woman is wed, or that by becoming married, the wife acquires the money — are equally valid in the spiritual sense.

The acquisition by money (*keseif* or love) alludes to the union of a Jew with G-d. The Hebrew term for marriage, *kiddushin* (from the term meaning separation or detachment), implies that a Jew’s marriage to G-d is connected to his separation from mundane matters.

Within this marriage of the Jewish people to G-d, there are two kinds of service with regard to the first stage of union: from “below to above,” or from “above to below.”

In the service of “below to above,” *kiddushin* comes first; a person must first remove himself from worldly pleasures. He is then roused with a love for G-d — the “acquisition of *keseif*.” In other words, with this form of

service, a person begins by “turning away from evil” and thereafter achieves the positive result of “doing good.”

In the service from “above to below,” the order is reversed. Once a person loves G-d — the “acquisition of *keseif*” — this emotion will bring about a state of *kiddushin*, wherein he distances himself from mundane pleasures.

The underlying reason for the difference in approach — from “below to above” or “above to below” — lies in the fact that these are two different types of spiritual service. The first kind is that of serving G-d in a logical manner, in an orderly progression. A logical and orderly kind of service implies that a person cannot attain a love for G-d without first divorcing himself from love of corporeal matters.

The second kind of service, however, transcends the bonds of logic. Here, notwithstanding the person’s current spiritual state, he utterly devotes himself to G-dliness. This in turn will cause him to become separated from the desires and delights of the physical world.

Based on *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. XIX, pp. 215-219.

FOOTNOTES

1. *Devarim* 24:1-2.
2. *Sifri*, *ibid.* See also *Kiddushin* 4b ff.; *Yerushalmi* , beginning of *Kiddushin*.
3. *Rambam*, *Hilchos Ishus* 3:21. See also *Yevamos* 31b and *Ran* , beginning of *Kiddushin*.
4. See *She'eilos U'Teshuvos Tzafnas Paneach* Dwinsk, I:9.
5. *Rashi* , beginning of *Kiddushin*.
6. See *Likkutei Torah* , *Beshallach* , p. 1c; *Keser Shem Tov*, section 9, *et al.*
7. See *Tzafnas Paneach* , *Hilchos Ishus* 3:15, *et al.*
8. See *Tanya* ch. 46 (end of p. 65b ff.); *Iggeres HaTeshuvah* ch. 10 (end of p. 99a).
9. *Pesach HaShaar* to *Shaar Ahavas HaShem*.
10. *Or HaTorah* , *Shavuos*, p. 199, 204. See also *Likkutei Torah* and *Keser Shem Tov*, *ibid.*

Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

© Copyright, all rights reserved. If you enjoyed this article, we encourage you to distribute it further, provided that you comply with Chabad.org's copyright policy.