



TORAH AND MARRIAGE

A Second Chance

Our Sages point out the similarities between the Jewish people receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai and marriage.

We commemorate the Giving of the Torah on Shavuot. On Purim, the Jewish people accepted the Torah a second time. Why was it necessary for the Torah to be given a second time? One explanation is that the Jewish people's experience at Mount Sinai was so awe-inspiring that when they accepted the Torah, figuratively marrying G-d, they did so without having the free will to choose to accept the Torah.¹

The experience was so overwhelming one might say the marriage was forced upon them.² Who could possibly experience the miracles of leaving Egypt and the splitting of the Red Sea as they did and not accept the Torah?

However, the events that led to the salvation of the Jewish people at the time of Purim were not dramatic in that sense. There was nothing overtly supernatural about them. At every step of the Purim story, it was possible to view the story as a natural progression of events. Each event followed as a logical consequence of what had happened before it. Thus on Purim,

the Jewish people accepted the Torah with the understanding they were free to choose an alternative natural explanation of the events they had experienced. They had the freedom to reject their faith that G-d guides the world. In their state of freedom, they chose to accept G-d and his Torah.

This choice, taken freely, is a choice for eternity.

Something analogous often takes place in a marriage. When couples marry, they are often in a euphoria similar to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai. They are overwhelmed by the powerful emotions they feel. They dream their vision of a shared future, the extraordinary promise of their life together.

Living together, they quickly learn their dreams are not identical. At times, this is more wonderful than what they dreamed of.

However, some couples find their attempts to build a fulfilling marriage bring them to difficulties and even to crisis.

Precisely at that time, a unique opportunity exists to rebuild their

relationship on the basis of what they have learned. Both partners must change to become a successful spouse. They must readjust their dreams to their new reality and learn to express their aspirations within the realistic context of the marriage. Some couples find this very difficult to do but many succeed in rebuilding their marriage, recrafting it on the basis of the wisdom they have learned. They then experience their new relationship literally like a second marriage. Their 'first' marriage, before the crisis, was a product of their dreams.

Their 'second' marriage is a tribute to their work, their wisdom, and their successful efforts to build a marriage deeply satisfying to both of them.

¹ Shabbat 88a.

² Maharal, *Netzach Yisrael*, Chapter 11; see also Introduction to *Ohr Chadash*.

Adapted from To Build and to Bond, published by Mizrahi Press.

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